



2004 Wisconsin Fishing Report

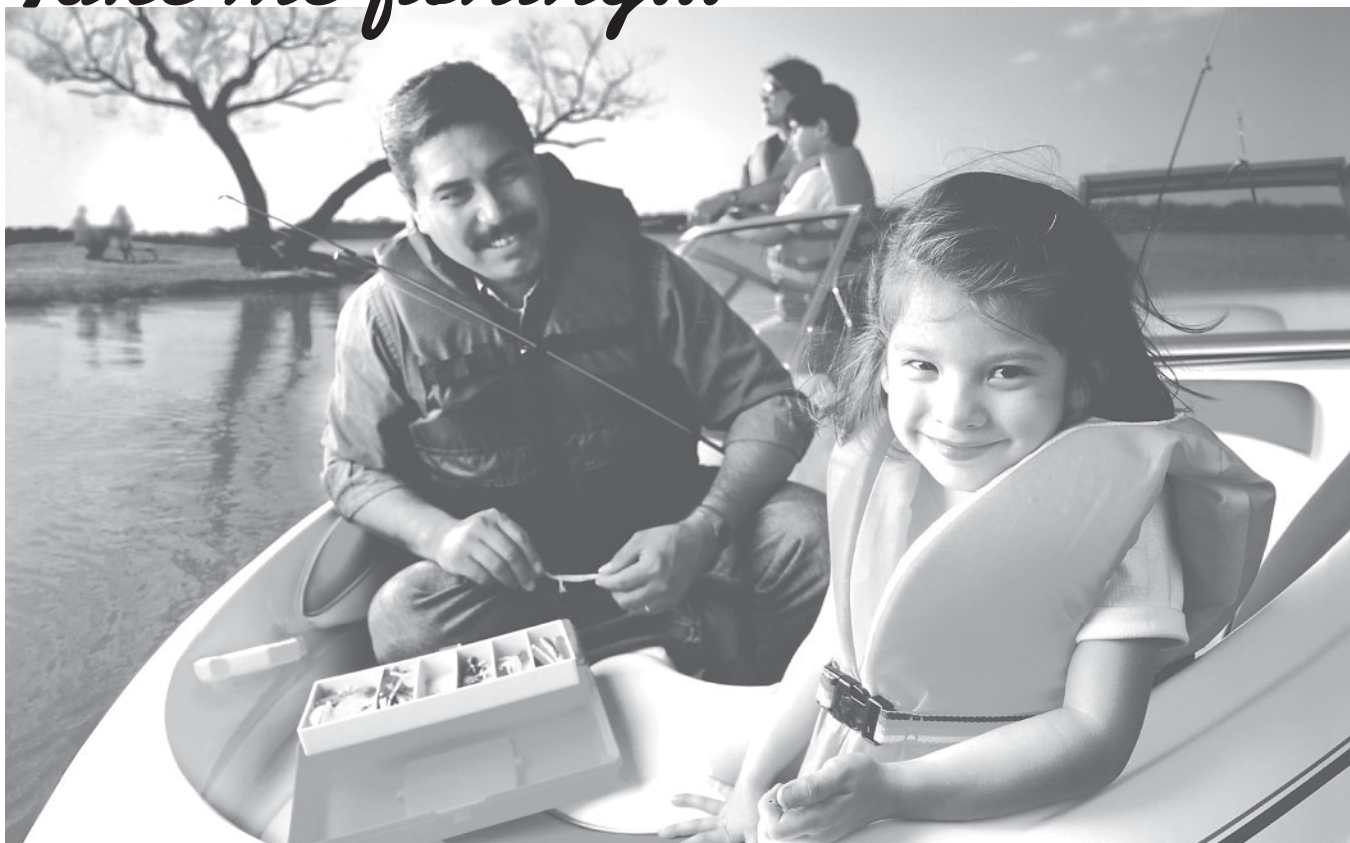


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Take me fishing...



Water works wonders
FOR FISHING, BOATING, AND
THE ENVIRONMENT

Where to fish?

This fishing report can help guide you to the fishing experience you're after. For more ideas, visit www.fishingwisconsin.org then look under "Fishing Wisconsin" for "Where to Fish."

Or visit www.waterworkswonders.org/, the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation's site with maps and other access information.

Need a fishing license?

3 quick and convenient ways:

- Call toll free at 1-877-945-4236
- Go online to www.wildlifelicenses.com
- Visit any license agent location or DNR service center

Need to borrow fishing tackle?

Rods and reels, hooks and other fishing equipment are available from some state parks and DNR offices. If you want to take a large group fishing, call ahead to reserve equipment and consider taking an angler education instructor course. For a list of loaner sites and more information on introducing kids to fishing, go to www.fishingwisconsin.org then look under "Kids, Parents, Educators."

Northern Region

Featured forecast.

Look inside for fishing reports for other regions

The 18 northernmost counties in Wisconsin encompass most of what was a vast pine forest before logging at the turn of the 20th Century. It is still primarily forested, though more hardwoods are now present. This is lake country: most of Wisconsin's 15,000 lakes are found here. The region also has the most miles of trout streams in the state and includes the vast, deep waters of Lake Superior. Whatever your angling preference, the Northwoods has it, although budget reductions have reduced some services. In particular, we won't be stocking legal-size trout in our "put-and-take" waters this spring. But on balance, the region provides some of the best angling in the state. Read on for local forecasts. - *Steve AveLallemant, fisheries specialist, Northern Region*

Lake Superior

Ice-out means the start of the spring trolling fishery on Chequamegon Bay, which occurs before the general inland fish-

ing season and provides a good early opportunity. The bay offers a very diverse fishery that doesn't require a large boat nor specialized gear such as downriggers. Access may be gained at excellent landings in Ashland, Washburn and Bayfield. Coho salmon are the primary species caught, but anglers also will catch brown trout, splake, chinook salmon, walleye, northern pike, yellow perch, smallmouth bass and an occasional lake trout.

Tributaries to Lake Superior provide an early trout fishing opportunity with a season starting March 27, 2004. Check the separate trout regulations pamphlet for details. Steelhead populations have increased significantly and will provide some good action.

The June through August lake trout trolling fishery provides the bulk of our salmonid harvest on Lake Superior. Good action may be found out of ports all along the lake from Superior to Saxon Harbor. Wind and water temperatures change daily and will impact fish activity for both depth and distance from shore, so check with local sport shops to get the latest conditions. If you don't own a boat large enough for Lake Superior waters, contact one of several charter captains. - *Stephen Schram, fisheries supervisor, Bayfield*

Barron and Polk counties

The vast majority of lakes in the two-county area contain largemouth bass, northern pike and panfish. Many lakes support excellent growth rates for panfish that are above average for northwestern Wisconsin; in fact, Frank Brown of Chippewa Falls caught a new state record pumpkinseed in

May on Big Round Lake. The 9.6 inch long, 1-pound, 2-ounce pumpkinseed edged out the previous record fish by 1 ounce.

Some of the top muskellunge fisheries are present here: Deer, Bone, and Cedar lakes and Apple River Flowage in Polk County and Rice, Big Moon and Sand lakes in Barron County.

Anglers who enjoy fishing for northern pike can find plenty of action as well. The Chetek Chain of Lakes and Staples Lake in Barron County as well as Balsam, Long, Loveless and Largon lakes in Polk County had more restrictive northern pike regulations put into place in 1995 to improve the quality and overall size structure of northern pike. These regulations appear to be working. In 2003, a DNR survey on Largon Lake in Polk County showed a 533 percent increase in northern pike densities with a fair number of fish larger than the 32-inch minimum size limit.

Weak walleye year classes and marginal stocking success over the past decade have limited adult walleye densities in the two-county area. However, the walleye present are typically very robust and in excellent shape due to faster growth rates and less competition. In an effort to improve walleye natural reproduction in the local two-county area, DNR partnered with St. Croix Tribal Fisheries staff and successfully installed a 400-foot walleye spawning reef on Big Round Lake in Polk County.

Three of Wisconsin's top river fisheries flow southward through Barron and Polk counties. The St. Croix and Red Cedar rivers offer float fishing with ample access for canoes and small johnboats, and excellent smallmouth bass, walleye, muskellunge,



Pamela Toshner caught this 29-plus inch walleye while charter fishing Wisconsin waters of Lake Superior, about seven miles outside the Superior harbor.

Photo by Dave Koneczny

sucker and redbreast fishing. For anglers who prefer to wade fish, the Apple River in Polk County offers very scenic and quality fishing opportunities for smallmouth bass, muskellunge, walleye and the occasional brown trout.

Water quality improvements have added to the list of trout streams in these counties. In 2003, DNR fisheries staff sampled more than 50 sites on the Hay River and Red Cedar watersheds in southern Barron County and will be classifying more than 40 new miles of trout water based on these surveys. In addition, DNR, in cooperation

continued on page 6

2004

Fishing Forecasts*

Northern Region page 1

Northeast Region page 5

South Central Region page 7

Southeast Region page 9

West Central Region page 10

* Forecasts as of Dec. 6, 2003

Dear Fellow Anglers,

Whether it's a 5-year-old with a 6-inch perch on a Mickey Mouse rod or a teenager with that first musky, it's the family fishing experiences that last forever. As we kick off another season, I'm reminded once again how important the fishing season is to all of us in Wisconsin, and how many family memories are related to fishing experiences. It's so much more than a fish caught or the one that got away; it might be a time or a place, an osprey crashing the surface of a lake or a mink working the shoreline. It might also be a new lure high in a tree, a plug left out of a boat, or otters raiding a full stringer tied to a pier. It's all happened to me, and I wouldn't trade the memories for anything.

The fishing looks good for the May 1 opener. This report will give you a lead on hot fishing spots for 2004, and describe the work our fisheries staff accomplished in the last year to help provide you with an enjoyable fishing experience.

Here's hoping you'll generate more memories for many years to come.

P. Scott Hassett

Scott Hassett
DNR Secretary



A 13-year-old Scott Hassett proudly displayed the 5-pound walleye he caught fishing below the dam on the Big Eau Pleine in the early 1960s.



40 years later, Scott Hassett helped out during fall musky electrofishing surveys of the Fox River in the City of Green Bay and netted this 39-inch spotted musky.

Trout stamp celebrates 25 years

by Lisa Gaumnitz, public affairs manager

Wisconsin's inland waters trout stamp program in 2003 celebrated 25 years of providing funding to help improve habitat along the state's trout streams. Since the first stamps were sold in 1978, the program has raised more than \$20 million, improved more than 620 miles of trout streams, and won national acclaim.

"Wisconsin is unique in earmarking trout stamp funds for habitat protection and improvement," Trout Unlimited concluded in its 1997 study of Wisconsin's trout program. "It is a model for acquisition, protection, and wild fish management nationwide."

The stamp program was created in 1977 to provide a dedicated, consistent source of funding for improving trout habitat. Anglers who fish inland waters are required to purchase the \$7 stamp in addition to a fishing license, with all revenue from the stamps dedicated to Department of Natural Resources trout habitat improvement efforts.

The program built on DNR's long history of successful trout stream habitat management — work that dates to the federal work programs in the 1930s — but generated a much higher annual level of funding than the \$140,000 previously available.



Trout stamp revenue has paid for installing structures along stream banks to re-create bank cover and narrow stream beds, improving habitat for trout.

Photo by Robert Queen

Last year, for example, revenues from the trout stamp helped fund \$1.37 million in projects by DNR crews and partners that developed about 30 miles of trout habitat, maintained earlier habitat improvement work, and paid for surveys of trout populations.

The number of trout stamps sold has varied from a low of 108,000 during the drought of 1990 to 195,000 during 1981. About 135,000 stamps have been sold annually over the last 10 years. In addition, Patron License holders (currently nearly 90,000) support the Inland Waters Trout Stamp program.

"Anglers can be assured that when they buy a trout stamp, the money is going into trout streams to improve fishing," says Larry Claggett, DNR coldwater fishery ecologist. "Research shows that almost overnight, trout move into areas where no cover previously existed, and within a few years, we see significant increases in fish density at the project site, especially of catchable-size trout."

Cady Creek, a small, coulee brook trout stream in Pierce County, is a classic example of the program's success in improving habitat and fishing. Farming and logging in the 19th Century severely degraded the stream and decimated its trout population, so much so that even when the creek later began to show signs of recovery as farming practices improved and land use changed, habitat in the lower reaches was so poor that surveys turned up only 200 trout per mile.

Beginning about 1995, DNR crews began working with interested landowners and conservation organizations to design and implement habitat improvement projects on Cady Creek. By the end of June 2001, crews had restored 2.5 miles by installing 300 lunkers, stabilizing, shaping and seeding the banks. Boulder retards and current deflectors now provide cover, divert flow and provide mid-channel feeding areas. As a result, overhead cover has increased 20 percent on that stretch of the stream, spawning habitat by 40 percent, and carrying capacity by 200 percent. Brook populations now approach 5,000 per mile.

Investing in Wisconsin's fisheries

Thank you for choosing to fish in Wisconsin in 2004. We've got a lot of lakes and rivers to fish and a lot of fish waiting to be caught — reasons why Wisconsin ranks as the second most popular fishing destination for nonresidents and why we have more resident anglers than all but five other much more populous states.

I'm sure you've noticed that some fishing license fees have increased. Almost all funding used for DNR fisheries management programs comes from license fees, which have been the same for the last seven years. We haven't increased the size of our fisheries program during that time, but our costs have risen with inflation and outpaced the revenue license sales bring in. And we need to complete some long overdue hatchery renovations. Last year we widely publicized the need for fee increases to simply maintain our existing programs, and we received a lot of support from angling and hunting groups statewide. We're very grateful for that support. It was critical in helping persuade lawmakers to support a fee increase.

While the increase was smaller than we requested, it is very important for sustaining Wisconsin fisheries and the kind of good fishing opportunities you've come to expect. The fee increases will go directly back into fisheries management programs important to Wisconsin anglers. The money raised will fully fund trout and warm water fish habitat improvement programs, continue our nationally recognized wild trout stocking program, construct fishing piers, and start needed fish research studies. Perhaps most importantly, the funds will enable us to fill many critical fish biologist and technician positions. And we will begin to renovate our Wild Rose State Fish Hatchery to address serious problems with its water supply and aging facilities.

The fee increases will not maintain all of our fisheries activities, however. DNR's fisheries program — like all of state government — is being asked to downsize. In 2003-04 we reduced programs by \$1.3 million and held 20 vacant fisheries program open. In 2004-05, we must permanently eliminate eight fisheries positions. We cannot make these program reductions without some loss of services in some counties and on Lake Michigan. Anglers also will see reduced stocking of domestic trout in Class 2 and 3 streams and cutbacks in staffing around the state.

Despite these changes, I hope you'll agree that the cost of a Wisconsin fishing license is pretty small compared to the other expenses associated with a fishing trip — and to the cost of fishing anywhere else. Even with the fee increases, we're still a bargain for the combination of fishing opportunities and quality outdoor experiences. We fall in the middle of the pack for both resident and nonresident annual license fees, and we still offer more discounted license options than any other state.

We hope you'll agree that your investment in good resource management is worth the cost. Enjoy your Wisconsin fishing and we'll see you out on the water!

Sincerely,
Mike Staggs, Director
Bureau of Fisheries Management and Habitat Protection



Mike Staggs, director of DNR's Fisheries Management and Habitat Protection Program, reeled in this 27.5 inch walleye from the Wisconsin River near Wisconsin Dells at dusk.

Photo by Steve Hewett

Fishing License & Stamp fee increases effective April 1, 2004

Fishing and hunting licenses provide the lion's share of money to the Fish & Wildlife Account that pays for Wisconsin conservation programs. Lawmakers in 2003 approved the first fee increase in seven years; normally fishing and hunting fees go up about every four years to cover rising costs of salaries, health care, gas, equipment and supplies. Careful management of Fish & Wildlife Account money and tribal gaming money allowed the Department of Natural Resources to avoid increasing fees earlier. But costs finally caught up.

The fishing license and stamp increases effective with the license year beginning April 1, 2004 are listed here. Also listed are new sport and conservation patron licenses for youth.

Residents:
Annual Fishing: \$17

Husband and wife: \$29
Two-day sports fishing: \$14
Sports: \$45; \$35 for 12- to 17-year-olds
Conservation patron: \$140; \$75 for 12- to 17-year-olds

Nonresidents:
Annual Fishing: \$40.
Annual family: \$65
Fifteen-day: \$24
Fifteen-day family: \$40
Four-day: \$18
Two-day sports fishing: \$14

Sports: \$275; \$35 for 12- to 17-year-olds
Conservation patron: \$600; \$75 for 12- to 17-year-olds

Stamps & Duplicates:
Great Lakes trout and salmon stamp: \$10
Duplicate sports or conservation patron: \$13
Duplicate fishing: \$9



Stocking

Fiscal Year 2002-2003 Wisconsin DNR Production Summary—DNR Hatcheries, Ponds, and Co-op Ponds

Species	Total Fish Stocked	Small Fingerling	Large Fingerling	Yearling	Adult (Broodstock)
Brook trout	515,376	246,246	90,626	177,584	920
Brown trout	3,112,086	1,160,275	971,584	977,043	3,184
Chinook salmon	1,698,164	1,698,164			
Coho salmon	556,559		271,417	285,142	
Hybrid muskellunge	15,860	4,239	11,067	554	
Lake sturgeon	45,933	22,589	23,344		
Lake trout	304,149	114,000	125,975	64,174	
Largemouth bass	160,832	81,025	79,807		
Muskellunge	124,129	3,842	119,631	656	
Northern pike	86,444	49,682	36,762		
Rainbow trout	987,359	121,535	550,011	314,543	1,270
Smallmouth bass	9,674		9,674		
Splake	143,114		143,114		
Walleye	6,581,634	6,513,840	67,794		
Statewide totals	14,341,313	10,015,437	2,500,806	1,819,696	5,374
<i>*In addition, DNR stocked an estimated, 25,697,026 fry of all species.</i>					

Budget cuts, water supply problems reduce fish stocking

By Lisa Gaumnitz, public affairs manager

Budget cuts, staff reductions and water supply problems have snagged Wisconsin’s 125-year-old fish propagation and stocking program and will decrease fishing opportunities on some waters in 2004 and beyond.

- Many “put-and-take” trout waters will not receive a stocking in 2004 and 2005 of legal-size fish because some hatchery-raised trout and salmon originally intended for stocking during those years had to be stocked out earlier, in spring 2003, to avoid the costs of raising them to a larger size.
- Trout and salmon production was cut for fall 2003 as the state propagation program sought to cope with budget cuts and water supply problems, and the need to direct money to renovating the century-old Wild Rose State Fish Hatchery. The cuts will affect stocking in 2004 and 2005.
- Northern pike production for stocking in 2004 has been eliminated due to staff vacancies at hatcheries, and production of large fingerling walleye and musky for stocking in 2004 has been cut back as a result of budget cuts.
- The state hatchery in Langlade has been temporarily closed until hiring restrictions and budget concerns ease.
- More stocking cuts are expected because the combination of hiring restrictions and budget cuts has left some hatcheries too short-staffed to continue regular production levels.

“2003 and 2004 are extraordinary, difficult years for the propagation program,” says Mike Staggs, who directs the Department of Natural Resources’ fisheries management and habitat protection program. “Like other fisheries management activities, propagation activities are affected by budget reductions. But the propagation program is also suffering from reduced groundwater flows at some hatcheries, vacancies that have or will not be filled, and meeting the challenge of paying for the first phase of an environmental and renovation project at Wild Rose.”

DNR’s fisheries program – like all of state government – is being asked to downsize. The 2003-2005 budget requires the program to make \$1.7 million in cuts as well as eliminate eight current positions. The stocking changes and the hatchery closure are among the cost-cutting measures the fisheries program made to stay within their budget for the fiscal year that started July 1, 2003; cutbacks in habitat work, fish surveys, and other management actions also started July 1.

Here’s more information about changes in Wisconsin’s propagation program for 2003, 2004 and 2005.

Changes in stocking of inland trout

Some brook, brown and rainbow trout raised at the Nevin, Osceola, St. Croix Falls and Bayfield hatcheries were stocked as small fingerlings in June 2003 instead of as originally planned in fall 2003 as large fingerlings, or in spring 2004 as yearlings. The trout, originally destined for “put-and-take” waters where less than 10 percent of the stocked trout survive to the next year, were stocked in inland waters with better than 10 percent overwinter survival, according to Al Kaas, statewide propagation coordinator. The early stocking will allow fisheries biologists to determine if a spring stocking is effective. Put-and-take waters (some Class 2 and Class 3) are the lowest priority, and are not expected to suffer long-term impacts from not receiving fish in a single year or two because survival from one year to the next is already very low, Kaas says.

“We estimated we saved about 10 percent of our annual production costs,” says Kaas. Stocking at a smaller size costs far less although survival rates aren’t expected to be as high. DNR saved on food, electricity and other production costs, as well as on distribution costs associated with harvesting and transporting larger fish. About one quarter of the fish produced from eggs collected in fall 2002 and then raised at hatcheries were stocked out early.

Changes in stocking and management of Great Lakes trout and salmon

Revenues from the Great Lakes Trout and Salmon Stamp that anglers must buy to fish Lake Michigan or Superior now pay for some costs to manage trout and salmon and a significant portion of producing and stocking these species. DNR is cutting some of these activities to enable the agency to use Great Lakes Trout and Salmon Stamp revenues to pay for a portion of the Wild Rose Hatchery renovation. (see related story, same page)

Cuts over the next two annual stocking cycles include eliminating the stocking of 62,500 Nipigon brook trout and 165,000 fall fingerling St. Croix strain brown trout in Lake Michigan. Because the brown trout for 2004 were already in production, they were stocked in spring 2003. Coho raised at the Bayfield Hatchery were stocked out in Lake Michigan as fall fingerlings instead of as the larger yearling fish, and splake, brown trout and chinook stocking levels were cut in Lake Superior.

Reduction in coolwater species production

No northern pike will be produced for stocking in 2004 because of staff vacancies at Lake Mills State Fish Hatchery and Wild Rose State Fish Hatchery. Half of the production of musky fingerlings for stocking in 2004 has been cut due to budget cuts,

and low priority large fingerling walleye stocking will be cut as a result of budget cuts.

Temporary closure of Langlade State Fish Hatchery

The current budget situation and hiring restrictions have prevented DNR from filling the supervisor’s position at this facility, so it is temporarily closed until the hiring restrictions are eased and the budget shortfall resolved, Kaas says. A permanent technician has been temporarily reassigned duties at the state’s nearby trout facilities at Lakewood and Thunder River. Some of the trout due to be transferred to Langlade for raising and eventual stocking in fall 2003 or spring 2004 were stocked out in spring 2003. Remaining production quotas intended for higher priority waters were assigned to other state hatcheries. The temporary closure is expected to save \$87,000 per year in operational costs and the salary and benefits of the supervisor position, Kaas said.

Reduction in steelhead production at Kettle Moraine State Fish Hatchery

DNR will cut production of three strains of steelhead at Kettle Moraine State Fish Hatchery by a combined total of 150,000, or 30 percent, for spring 2004 stocking because the groundwater flow has decreased due to drought conditions. The lower flows result in a reduced capacity to raise fish. “To reduce stress and the potential for disease, we stocked some of the fish out earlier in 2003 than normal and will reduce the number of fish stocked in 2004,” says Bill Horns, Great Lakes fisheries specialist. “We’d rather have 350,000 large healthy steelhead than 500,000 smaller unhealthy ones.” Steelhead production in future years will depend on the availability of groundwater at the hatchery.

Wild Rose Hatchery renovation progressing

The state budget approved for 2004-05 included \$12.5 million of funding for Phase I of the renovation of the Wild Rose State Fish Hatchery, the workhorse of the state propagation system.

“This work will allow the aging hatchery, which is a critical component of Wisconsin’s fish stocking program, to meet environmental laws written since its construction and replace worn out facilities,” says Mike Staggs, director of the Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Management and Habitat Protection program. “Renovation also would allow us to expand production of trout and Great Lakes salmon.”

Primary funding for the project would come from sale of fishing licenses and Great Lakes salmon stamps and DNR’s federal



Photo by Robert Queen

DNR fish stocking information now available online

Wisconsin’s fish stocking database is now online, giving anglers and others a quick and convenient answer to the question of where the state stocks fish. The Web site can be found at www.fishingwisconsin.org, then look under “Wisconsin fish” and select “stocking.” The direct URL is www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/fhp/fish/pages/stocking.shtml

The Web site features an interactive map of Wisconsin that allows people to easily retrieve and view or print a stocking report for a particular county, all counties at once, Lake Michigan, or Lake Superior. The stocking reports contain information on the county, waterbody, species, strain, location and average length of the 45 million fish stocked in 2002 by DNR fish hatcheries, ponds, rearing stations and co-op ponds. Most fish that are stocked are not of a size to be caught by anglers for a year or even two or three; older stocking information is expected to be added to the database in 2004.

“Ninety percent of Wisconsin’s waters already have outstanding game or panfishing entirely due to natural reproduction, but stocking is an important component of the 10 percent of Wisconsin waters that are stocked,” says Mike Staggs, who directs the DNR Fisheries Management and Habitat Protection program. “Stocking helps restore or maintain fisheries in these waters, expanding opportunities for anglers.”

Staggs cautions that whether a waterbody is stocked or not is not always a good indicator of how good the fishing will be. But the stocking database should help steer trout anglers to good action on Class 2 and 3 trout waters, and to musky hunters fishing Category 0, 2, 3, and 4 musky waters. These waters generally rely on stocking for good fishing. Listings of Class 2 and 3 trout waters, and of all categories of musky waters, can be found at www.fishingwisconsin.org, then scroll down and select “Where to fish” and look for “Wisconsin Trout Streams” or “Musky Waters.”

Major fishing regulation changes for 2004-2005

By Patrick Schmalz, warmwater lakes fisheries specialist, Madison

Wisconsin’s general inland fishing season opens May 1, 2004, with a number of new fishing regulations. Major rule changes are listed below, but check the 2004-2005 Guide to Wisconsin Hook and Line Fishing Regulations for a full listing. The guide is available at DNR offices and license agents and can be downloaded by visiting www.fishingwisconsin.org and looking under “Fishing Wisconsin” and “Regulations.” Or contact the Bureau of Fisheries Management and Habitat Protection at (608) 267-7498 for more details.

These major rule changes take effect April 1, 2004, unless noted:

Hook and line fishing season closure
The first Sunday in March (starting March 6, 2005) is the closing date for the general inland hook and line fishing season, rough fish spearing, and hook and line seasons on the Great Lakes and tributaries. The closing date for those seasons was previously March 1.

Fish tagging
Anglers can no longer tag fish they catch unless they are issued a Scientific Collectors Permit from the Department of Natural Resources. Requirements of a Scientific Collectors Permit include that the tagging effort must be determined to lead to useful scientific knowledge.

Sturgeon spearing on the Winnebago System Upriver Lakes

Beginning with the 2005 season, a separate sturgeon carcass tag will be created for the Winnebago system upriver lakes (Lakes Poygan, Winneconne and Butte des Morts) and for Lake Winnebago during the special sturgeon spearing seasons held on the Upriver Lakes every five years. The Upriver Lakes tag would be usable only on the Upriver Lakes; anyone choosing to buy this tag would only be able to spear on the upriver lakes and not on Lake Winnebago. Likewise, a Lake Winnebago tag bought for the 2005 season could only be used for spearing on Lake Winnebago. In addition,

the Upriver Lakes spearing season will be reduced to one day.

Lake sturgeon hook and line fishing
Waters open to hook and line fishing for lake sturgeon are now specifically listed and all other waters of the state are closed to hook and line fishing for lake sturgeon. The traditional hook and line waters remain open, but waters with potentially remnant or recovering lake sturgeon populations will now be closed in order to protect the remnant fish from harvest.

Holcombe Flowage tributary musky regulations

The 40-inch minimum length limit for muskellunge on Holcombe Flowage (located in Chippewa and Rusk counties) has been extended to include tributaries upstream to a barrier to fish movement. This includes the Chippewa River and all tributaries upstream to the first dam or lake and the Flambeau River upstream to the Thornapple Flowage dam including all tributaries upstream to the first dam or lake, Rusk County; and the Chippewa River and all its tributaries upstream to the first dam or lake, Sawyer County; the Jump River, North Fork Jump River, and South Fork Jump River upstream to Big Falls (T33N R2W, S20) and their tributaries upstream to the first dam or lake, Price County; the Jump River in Rusk and Taylor counties.

Shovelnose sturgeon hook and line fishing

Hook and line fishing for shovelnose sturgeon has been closed on the Chippewa River downstream from Interstate Highway 94 bridge at Eau Claire including its tributaries upstream to the first dam or lake.

Wisconsin – Iowa boundary waters walleye and sauger regulations

A 20- to 27-inch protected slot limit with only one fish larger than 27 inches allowed has been established for walleye on the Mississippi River Pool 12. The daily bag limit has been reduced to six in total for walleye and sauger on all Wisconsin-Iowa boundary waters (Mississippi River).

In addition, a fish refuge beginning December 1 of each year and lasting through March 15 of the following year has been

established in, on or along the Mississippi River from lock and dam number 11 downstream to the State Highway 61 and 151 bridge on the Wisconsin-Iowa boundary waters (effective Dec. 1, 2003). The rules will be in effect for five years and then evaluated to determine their effectiveness.

Special regulations by county

Size and/or bag limits that differ from statewide rules have been established on the following waters:

Dane County – The minimum length limit for muskellunge on Lakes Waubesa, Monona and Wingra has been increased to 45 inches.

Oneida County – The minimum length for walleye on East Horsehead and Manson lakes has been changed to the statewide minimum length of 15 inches and a bag limit of five. Previously there was no minimum length limit and the bag limit was five with only one fish over 14 inches allowed.

Pepin County – The daily bag limit for panfish has been reduced to 10 in total on Thompson Lake.

Sawyer County – The daily bag limit for panfish has been reduced to 10 in total on Sand Lake.

Sheboygan County – The minimum length limit has been increased to 15 inches,

the daily bag limit reduced to one in total, and an artificial lure-only restriction has been established for trout on Ben Nutt Creek, Mill Creek, and the Onion River upstream from County Highway E effective March 1, 2004.

St. Croix County – On Dry Dam Lake, the minimum length limit has been increased to 18 inches and the daily bag limit reduced to one in total for largemouth and smallmouth bass; the minimum length limit has been increased to 32 inches and the daily bag has been reduced to one for northern pike; and the daily bag limit has been reduced to 10 in total for panfish.

On Squaw Lake, the daily bag limit has been reduced to 10 in total for panfish.

Taylor County – The minimum length limit has been increased to 9 inches and the daily bag limit reduced to three in total for trout on Wood Creek effective March 1, 2004.

Vilas County – The minimum length limit has been increased to 18 inches and the daily bag limit decreased to three for walleye on Found Lake.

Waushara County – The minimum length limit has been increased to 18 inches and the daily bag limit decreased to one in total for largemouth and smallmouth bass on Hartford Lake.



Fishing is great family fun, as Heidi, Bridget and Leah Hujik of Eau Claire have discovered.

Photo by Bob Hujik

Go online before you wet a line

Get the right water for the fishing experience you want

Wisconsin’s 15,000 lakes (including two Great Lakes) and 44,000 miles of cold and warm water streams make the Badger State an angler’s paradise. To help you find the fishery and fishing experience you want, visit www.fishingwisconsin.org. Then look for “Fishing Wisconsin,” then “Where to Fish” for links to publications or lists describing different places to go fishing:

- Accessible fishing on Coon Creek
- Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest
- Disabled accessible fishing & hunting sites in northeast Wisconsin
- Disabled accessible fishing facilities in Dane County
- “Quality-sized” fishing opportunities on waters with special regulations
- Turtle-Flambeau Flowage fishery
- Musky waters
- Northwoods Fishing - information on fishing in Oneida, Price, Vilas counties and the Lac Du Flambeau Indian Reservation
- Milwaukee River Public Access
- Around Angling Waters - hook and line opportunities year around in Wisconsin
- Places to Fish with Kids
- Public Wildlife Recreation Land - a link to information on many larger state properties with recreation opportunities, including fishing
- Where you can motor troll
- “Wisconsin Lakes Directory”
- “Wisconsin Trout Streams.”



Kids will love going fishing even more if you take them to a water where they’ll get some strikes and maybe even reel in a keeper, as this young angler did. Go online to find a list of good places to take kids.

Photo by Robert Queen

If you don’t have Internet access, contact DNR’s Bureau of Fisheries Management & Habitat Protection and ask them to download one of these lists for you or provide publications when available (608) 267-7498.

Follow fish consumption advisories for heart-healthy eating

Fish are heart-healthy and a good source of protein, but some contain contaminants at levels that can pose health risks to people who eat fish frequently. To reduce your exposure to these contaminants, Wisconsin issues advice to help you plan what fish to keep as well as how often and how much fish to eat. Please read the information below and consult the complete fish consumption advisory, “Choose Wisely - a health guide for eating fish in Wisconsin.” It can be found online at www.fishingwisconsin.org, then look under “Wisconsin Fish,” and “Consumption Advice.”

PCB advisory: Waterbodies carrying advisories for polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) are listed in “Choose Wisely.” PCBs are most often associated with industrialized river systems and the Great Lakes. The contaminant is generally stored in the fat of fish so you can reduce PCB levels in fish you eat by trimming away the fatty areas and properly cooking your fish. You also can choose to fish for less fatty species or smaller legal-sized fish. If a species is not listed for a particular waterbody, then follow the statewide mercury advisory.

Statewide mercury advisory: Mercury is found in almost all waters throughout the state, and mercury levels *cannot* be reduced by trimming away fat. Wisconsin’s statewide advice for most of Wisconsin’s inland waters recommends that:

Women of childbearing years, nursing mothers and all children under 15, may eat:

- One meal per week of panfish such as bluegill, sunfish, black crappie, white crappie, yellow perch or bullheads AND
- One meal per month of walleye, northern pike, smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, channel catfish, flathead catfish, white sucker, drum, burbot, sauger, sturgeon, carp, white bass, rock bass or other species.
- People in this sensitive group are advised to not eat musky.

Men, and women beyond their childbearing years may eat:

- Unlimited amounts of panfish AND
- One meal per week of walleye, northern pike, smallmouth and largemouth bass, channel and flathead catfish, white sucker, drum, burbot, sauger, sturgeon, carp, white bass, rock bass and other species.

In addition, more than 90 waterbodies carry more protective consumption advice for reducing mercury exposure. The list of these waters is found in “Choose Wisely.”

Regional forecasts for fishing 2004

Northeast Region

The Northeast Region of Wisconsin provides diverse, high quality and abundant angling opportunities. Region waters include a large portion of Lake Michigan; Lake Winnebago, Wisconsin's largest inland lake; Big Green Lake, Wisconsin's deepest inland lake; 1,000 small lakes; several large river systems including the Fox, Wolf, Oconto, Peshtigo and Menominee rivers; and more than 2,000 miles of trout streams.

Door County

Lake Michigan and Green Bay, including tributary streams - Nearly 4.5 million trout and salmon are stocked in the Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan and Green Bay each year. The Lake Michigan trout and salmon fishery off Door County was better than usual during the past two summers and included a mixed bag of steelhead, brown, and lake trout, coho and chinook salmon. Chinook fishing has been exceptional. The chinook harvests during 2001 from Lake Michigan (191,378) and 2002 (275,454) were the highest since 1987; harvest totals from 2003 were still being analyzed when this report went to production but are also expected to be very strong.

The chinook fishery of 2001, 2002 and 2003 will be tough acts to follow, but anglers are hopeful for a repeat performance in 2004. The chinook program on Lake Michigan has recovered from the Bacterial Kidney Disease problems that devastated the fishery a decade ago.

Lake Michigan and Green Bay water level dropped to within 1/2 foot of the all-time record low in early 2003 and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is predicting that the lake level will remain well below average throughout 2004. Many of the smaller boat launch access points will probably be unusable again. Anglers planning to fish the lakeshore are advised to check with local municipalities before going to a particular launch. Many structures that were normally just below the water surface of Lake Michi-

gan and Green Bay are now exposed and areas that were safe to travel in the past may have new obstructions lurking just below the surface. Lake Michigan and Green Bay boaters are advised to use caution when navigating unfamiliar waters. On a positive note, one new boat launch, on the recently acquired Carmody property on Little Sturgeon Bay, is projected to be ready by July 2004, improving boater access to this popular fishing area.

The low lake level and low stream flow impacted salmon runs and egg harvest in fall 2003. Without the half-mile long pipeline installed by state fisheries crews in 2000, chinook egg harvest at Strawberry Creek would have been a bust. The pipeline delivers 1,500 gallons of water per minute to supplement the flow of Strawberry Creek. This assures that in coming years the Lake Michigan chinook salmon program will not be in jeopardy due to low flow and low water levels.

The low lake and bay level also affect access of trout and salmon into Door County's tributary streams. Whitefish Bay and Heins creeks are stocked annually with steelhead. Runs of adult steelhead and other trout and salmon into these and other Door County tributary streams in spring and fall depend heavily on the amount of runoff from snow-melt and rain.

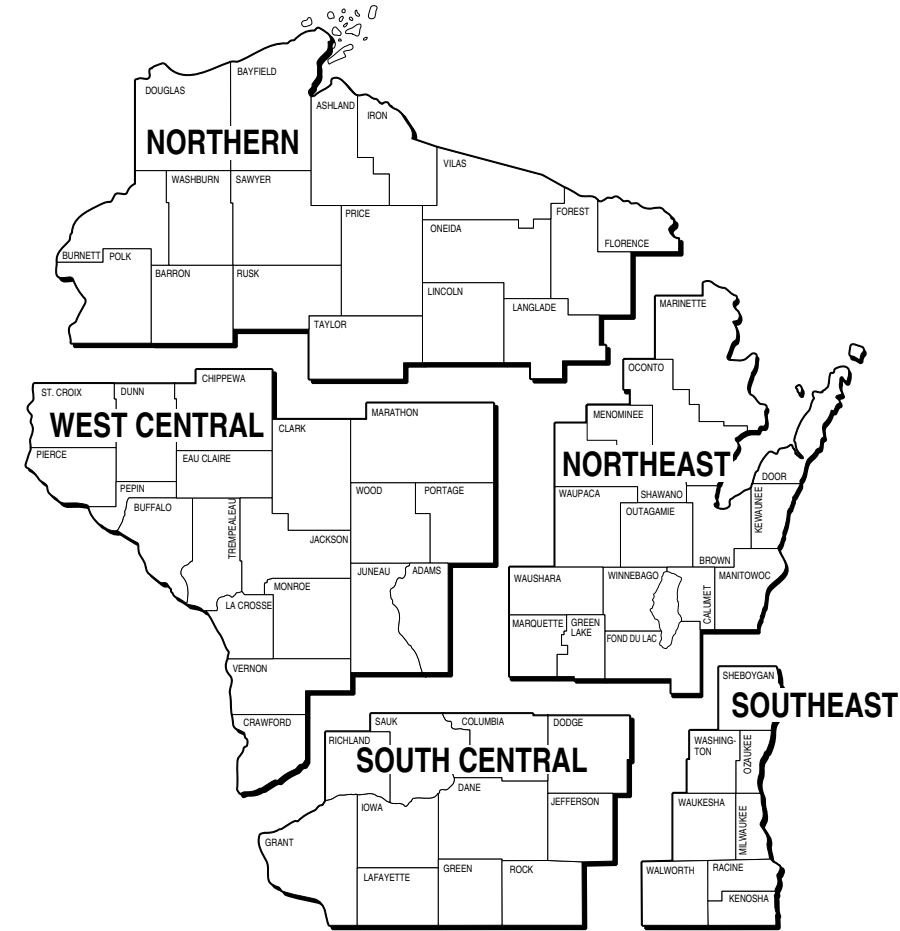
Smallmouth bass populations along the Door County shoreline remain strong and should provide exciting fishing in 2004. The strong 1995 year class of bass will continue to provide abundant fish in excess of 18 inches. Trophy-sized fish above 20 inches from older year classes are also present. Fishing for northern pike should continue to provide action for anglers on the open water or in winter.

Walleye populations in and around Sturgeon Bay / Little Sturgeon Bay received an important supplemental stocking in 2003 as nearly 250,000 walleye fingerlings were divided between the two bays. This walleye stocking effort should help establish a good 2003 year class of walleye, which should be available to anglers for several years to come.

Great Lakes spotted musky were stocked for the second consecutive year in Sturgeon Bay area in 2003. About 2,900 fingerlings were stocked in Little Sturgeon and 4,300 fingerling and 49 yearling musky were stocked in Sturgeon Bay. This expanded stocking was part of the decade-long effort to re-establish reproducing populations of this native species in Green Bay. Bragging-size muskies have already been reported caught in Green Bay in recent years, adding to the already sizable mixed bag of sport fish available in the Lake Michigan and Green Bay waters around Door County. - *Paul Peeters, fisheries biologist, and Mike Toney, fisheries supervisor, Sturgeon Bay*

Brown County

Fox River and lower Green Bay - Fall surveys on the Fox River below the DePere dam and on lower Green Bay have been completed. On the Fox River, nearly 5,500 adult walleye were tagged this past fall. Many of the fish were from the strong 2001 year class and were 15 to 17 inches long. Some larger walleye up to 27 inches were also captured. Our Green Bay index shocking in September turned up many young-of-the-year walleye as did our Fox River index survey in November. These findings may indicate that 2003 will produce an outstanding year class of walleye. The abundance of walleye from our fall surveys in-



icates that in 2004 and for many years into the future, walleye fishing should be excellent on the Fox River and lower Green Bay.

The spotted musky program continues to grow and excite musky anglers. Fall anglers continue to catch some very nice fish. In 2003, fall shocking surveys on the Fox River captured musky from 21 to 44.4 inches in length, so the river in 2004 should again provide ample opportunities for anglers to catch one of these very large fish. Anglers are reminded that the size limit is 50 inches.

Many other fishing opportunities exist on the Fox River and lower Green Bay throughout the year. Anglers successfully target northern pike and yellow perch during spring months and smallmouth bass and catfish during the summer months. Cool fall waters can provide a mixed catch of fish that can include walleye, chinook salmon, musky or even whitefish.

Anglers catching and keeping tagged fish are asked return the tag and fishing information to the address on the tag. Anglers that practice catch and release should leave the tag in the fish, note the tag number and send the information to the address on the tag. The information we collect from anglers through tag returns is vital for effectively managing the fishery. -*Rod Lange, fisheries technician, Green Bay*

Kewaunee and Manitowoc counties

Lake Michigan waters - Anglers in 2004 should again enjoy good success in catching Lake Michigan trout and salmon from local ports. Early season action should include catches of steelhead and brown trout near harbors or warm water discharges. Summer should once again see anglers catching good numbers of chinook salmon and steelhead. Chinook fishing was very good in 2003 and should be equally as exciting in 2004 with many large fish available for anglers. Steelhead angling

should be similar to the past year's, with very good action when favorable wind patterns develop. As the water cools in fall, mixed catches of chinook salmon, domestic rainbow trout and brown trout should increase.

Tributary streams - Low water conditions in tributaries resulted in a slow spring steelhead run in 2003, but if flows improve in 2004, anglers may see an improved steelhead run. However, if conditions remain poor with low flows, the best bets for steelhead action will be in the larger tributaries. Northern pike runs should be good in the Manitowoc and Twin rivers. For anglers wanting to dip suckers during the spring run, the run should be good, although low water may reduce the number of these fish entering streams. Smelt runs will continue to be very poor because of a very low lakewide population. The fall run of chinook salmon into tributaries will provide anglers many opportunities to catch these large fish.

Kewaunee, Manitowoc and Calumet county inland waters

A variety of fishing opportunities exists in the lakes and rivers found in these counties. Northern pike and panfish anglers should have good success in catching these fish during the ice-fishing season on local lakes. Anglers also may target large northern pike on local tributary streams during late winter, but anyone doing so should use extreme care when fishing on these streams. Black crappie, bluegill, and yellow perch are always a good bet early in the open water season, with largemouth bass fishing improving later in the summer. Inland trout fishing will be much reduced in 2004 as compared to previous years because trout stocking in local lakes and rivers has been discontinued because of budgetary concerns. - *Steve Hogler, fisheries biologist, Mishicot*



Joe Junion, president of the C & R Musky Club, caught and released this 50.5 inch spotted musky on May 17, 2003, from the waters of Green Bay. The fish, which had a DNR tag in it, was one the agency stocked as part of a project started in the late 1980s, with the help of local musky clubs, to reintroduce the native musky species to Green Bay.

Photo by Andy Sturm

Northern Region

continued from page 1

with Trout Unlimited, completed another 2,000 feet of habitat improvement on Turtle Creek in southwestern Barron County. Many of the trout streams in the “Hill Country” of southern Barron County offer native brook trout and a few brown trout. Turtle, Silver, Vance, Upper Pine, Dority and Pokegama creeks have lots of trout but the fish are generally smaller due to higher trout densities. For those anglers who wish to tackle a large brown trout, the Brill and Yellow rivers in Barron County are a good bet. In Polk County, better trout fishing can be found on the Clam and Trade rivers and McKenzie Creek. - *Heath Benike, fisheries biologist, Barron*

Burnett and Washburn counties

The Namekagon and St. Croix rivers are heavily used by canoeists and tubers. Despite the heavy traffic, creel surveys show that very little time is spent fishing. Lack of fishing pressure results in quality fisheries for smallmouth, walleye, muskie northern pike, and jumbo channel cats. As federally designated Wild and Scenic Riverways, these rivers are in a wilderness setting with few access points or bridges for shore fishing. Fishing is done from canoes or shallow draft boats with small outboards. Savvy anglers start early in the morning and anchor to fish the deeper pools. Most anglers are off the river by 10 a.m. to avoid the steady parade of canoes and tubes. For specific information about access points, shore camping and river maps, contact the National Park Service at (715) 483-3284 or www.nps.gov/sacn. - *Larry Damman, fisheries biologist, Spooner*

Northern Rusk and Sawyer counties

The two big continuing trends in these waters are increasing numbers and size of smallmouth bass and trophy-sized (50-plus inches) muskellunge. For excellent smallmouth, try Round, Connors and Grindstone lakes in Sawyer County, plus the Flambeau



Fifteen-year-old Phil Lubke of Milton caught this bluegill on Marengo Lake in Bayfield County in August 2003.

Photo by Doug Lubke

and Chippewa rivers in both counties. A few of the hot trophy muskellunge lakes include Lac Courte Oreilles (50-inch minimum size limit), Chippewa Flowage (45-inch minimum size), and Dairyland Reservoir, with a 40-inch minimum size. Two historic walleye lakes that are now showing good populations of big largemouth bass are Smith and Nelson lakes, near Hayward in Sawyer County.

There is no clear trend for walleye. A few “up” waters include Round, Chetac, and Grindstone lakes. The slot-size regulation in Grindstone Lake has produced a better population of large and mid-size walleyes. The “down” lakes include Sand, Nelson, and Smith lakes in Sawyer County; we have initiated management programs to rehabilitate their walleye populations.

Bluegill and crappie size structure is improving on those waters where a 10 bag is now in place, most notably Nelson and Chetac lakes in Sawyer County. Look to these two for the opportunity to catch really large gills in the near future. Historically, both produced trophy panfish before overharvest took its toll.

Wild brook trout seem to be mounting a comeback in the Blue Hills streams (Devils Creek, Weirgor system), Couderay, and Namekagon. DNR and the U.S. Park Service finished a major habitat restoration project on Schultz Springs/Cap Creek in fall 2003. This is major brook trout nursery area for the Upper Namekagon.

While much of trout management emphasis is switching to wild trout, the stocked trout-only lakes continue to provide good fishing and an occasional large holdover, too. Some of the better trout-only lakes in this region include Camp Smith Lake in Sawyer County and Three Lakes in the Blue Hills region of Rusk County. Two-story management is very successful in Ashegon Lake near Couderay in Sawyer County, providing opportunity for five trout species as well as bass, walleye, and panfish!- *Frank Pratt, senior fisheries biologist, Hayward*

Bayfield and Douglas counties

Walleye population estimates on Diamond Lake in Bayfield County in 2003 indicate a stable but low-density walleye population with a good size structure. There is a minimum size limit for walleye of 15 inches, but walleye from 20 to 28 inches may not be kept and only one fish over 28 inches is allowed. This regulation appears to be accomplishing its goal of protecting the adult spawning population. A walleye-spawning reef was constructed on Upper Eau Claire Lake in an attempt to bolster natural reproduction with the considerable help of the Eau Claire Lakes Sportman’s Club.

A muskellunge population estimate was completed on Bayfield County’s Namekagon Lake and revealed a low-density but high-quality population. The 50-inch minimum size limit is producing many fish in the 43- to 48-inch range, with re-

ports of a few past the 50-inch mark. Namekagon Lake is now producing one of the best size structures of muskellunge in Wisconsin.

The White River in Bayfield County has historically been known for its premier brown trout fishery. Due to concerns about a perceived decline in the fishery, DNR initiated a study in 2003 to compare natural regimes and species composition. Population estimates completed on four stations in the White River indicate that populations are down in the middle of the Bibon Swamp but remain relatively stable in the upper reaches. These initial results also indicate that a high-quality brown trout fishery is still present. The next two years of surveys will better define changes in the brown trout populations and give direction to future management. - *Scott Toshner, fisheries biologist, Brule*

Ashland and Iron counties

The Gile and Turtle-Flambeau flowages continue to offer some of the best walleye and smallmouth bass fishing in the north. Annual fall recruitment surveys have been conducted since 1984 to monitor natural reproduction; walleye year-class abundance has been above the 19-year average in seven of the last 10 years. The Flambeau Flowage in particular produced two banner year classes recently. Walleye reproduction in 1997 was nearly twice as abundant as the highest documented during the 1980s, and the 2002 year class was the second largest ever produced. Anglers can expect to catch an abundance of 15 to 16 inch walleyes from the 1997 year class and many small walleye less than 10 inches from the 2002 year class. Anglers also are reminded that the spiny water flea, a harmful exotic species of plankton, has been found in the Gile Flowage. Anglers should make every effort to drain all water from their boats including live wells, bilges and even motor cooling systems before launching in other waters to help contain the spread of this pest.

Many of the smaller brook trout streams have been rehabilitated through beaver and beaver dam removal over the past several years. Brown trout are now being stocked in the East Fork of the Montreal River after an intensive beaver removal program as well. If successful, a top-notch brown trout fishery will add to the diversity of fishing opportunities available to anglers in these northern counties. - *Jeff Roth, fisheries biologist, Mercer*

Price, Rusk and Taylor counties

Fish surveys in 2003 on area lakes found some excellent fish populations: Butternut and Solberg lakes in Price County had above-average abundance of walleye, and

Sailor Lake in Price County showed a very good northern pike population. Top action lakes for musky are Amacoy English, Mineral, Spider, Lower Clam, Day and Potter. Day and Potter provide a harvest opportunity for slow growing musky with a 28-inch minimum length limit.

Installation of solar- and wind-powered aeration systems have helped prevent winterkill and greatly improved fishing, especially for bass, on some of the more remote lakes in the Chequamegon National Forest, including Riley and Little Clam in Price County and Twin Lake in Ashland County. These and other small lakes are not very fertile and catch-and-release is encouraged to maintain these fisheries.

Rusk County provides some good trout fishing opportunities and habitat rehabilitation efforts will continue to improve it. Last summer, fisheries staff worked to restore trout habitat on 2,000 feet of the South Fork of Main Creek. With the cooperation of local landowners, the crew installed 300 feet of cover structures and numerous rocks and logs. They also installed two cattle crossings and put up a mile of cattle exclusion fencing. A private county group, the Wildlife Restoration Association, also worked with a local landowner and made improvements to 300 feet of Becky Creek through bank stabilization and cattle exclusion fencing. - *Steve AveLallemant, fisheries specialist, Northern Region, filed this report. The fisheries biologist position is vacant at Park Falls.*

Florence and Forest counties

For the adventurous canoe or float tube angler, walk-in access bass lakes provide a unique experience. These small, wild-shoreline bass waters are sensitive to angling pressure, so please consider catch-and-release. Larger waters like Metonga are a good bet for both smallmouth bass and walleye. A recent fisheries survey of 1,700-acre Pine Lake near Hiles found a good bass population and plenty of bass cover to fish. Walleyes are not numerous in Pine Lake but most are large. Combined with the abundant panfish population in Pine Lake, it’s a go-to spot for the angling family.

Trout anglers who just can’t wait to wet a line can fish the early catch-and-release season beginning March 6 in the Pine River in Florence County, or parts of the Peshtigo, Pine, and Rat rivers in Forest County. Both the Peshtigo and Pine are mixed brook and brown trout fisheries, with some trophy-sized browns available. Once the regular trout season opens, many anglers go for the numerous smaller, headwater streams with native brook trout. Others who like to cast a fly can head for the Pine and the Popple,



Namekagon Lake carries a 50-inch minimum size limit, which is helping produce many fish in the 43- to 48-inch range, with reports of a few musky making it past the 50-inch mark. This 46.5-inch fish was captured during DNR fish population surveys.

Photo by Cordell Manz

designated as “Wild Rivers” by state law. Good trout habitat is spotty on these relatively large streams but both rivers hold some very nice trout for the serious angler, in addition to beautiful wild shorelines and numerous waterfalls in the lower reaches. Local volunteers with the Florence County Lakes and Rivers Association and Trout Unlimited are helping DNR to protect the Wild Rivers watershed and restore fish habitat lost to 19th century logging-era practices. - *Bob Young, fisheries biologist, Woodruff*

Oneida County

We’ve had strong recruitment of wall-eyes throughout the mid- to late 1990s, and an exceptional walleye year class from 2001 will start to provide action in 2004. Data from the lakes we surveyed last year reflect this regional recruitment trend. Naturally-reproducing walleye populations were very strong in Squaw and Bearskin lakes; Bolger Lake had a walleye population of 3.5 adults per acre, close to average. We evaluated several stocked walleye waters, including Bear, Big Carr, Gilmore, Hodstradt, Stella, Thunder (near Three Lakes) and Two Sisters. They generally showed good bass populations but little contribution by walleye stocking.

Oneida County boasts many excellent northern pike and muskellunge lakes. Last year’s surveys found good adult size structure for muskies in Bearskin and Squaw, but population estimates won’t be completed until later this year. Killarney is known for northern pike, but the 2003 population estimate was low at only 0.8 per acre. We also saw good numbers of grass pickerel on the Minocqua chain. Most anglers probably mistake them for small northern pike or musky. These diminutive pike rarely exceed a foot in length, but we released a 14-inch trophy back into Lake Tomahawk. A dark teardrop mark below the eye and fully scaled cheeks and gill covers identify grass pickerel. Bass numbers remain high in many lakes, and bass fishing during 2003 was reported as “excellent” by area anglers and guides. Growth rates in the northern part of the state tend to be somewhat slow, but good-sized fish can be found if you look for them. - *John Kubisiak, fisheries biologist, Rhinelander*

Lincoln and Langlade counties

Last year, we completed a comprehensive fish survey on Lake Alice in Lincoln County. We found good numbers and size structures of walleye, muskellunge, small-

mouth bass, largemouth bass, perch, bluegill, and crappie. We also found abundant natural reproduction and good numbers of juvenile walleye. This fishery is in very good shape for all species. Anglers wanting to take home some pan-sized bass are encouraged to harvest all bass (no minimum length limit) up to their daily limit of five from McGee Lake in Langlade County. McGee Lake is a 23-acre spring pond that has become infested with largemouth bass, much to the detriment of the native brook trout and stocked rainbow trout. Most of the bass are 7 to 12 inches, but they run all the way up to 19 inches. McGee Lake is south of State Highway 64, so bass can be harvested beginning May 1. Fisheries staff at Antigo are pursuing an aggressive program of trout habitat rehabilitation to restore quality trout populations for the angler. Last year, crews dredged Trout Springs in Langlade County to remove accumulated silt. It will take the pond several years to fully repopulate with trout and reach its new potential with the improved habitat and increased living space for trout. This summer, Maxwell Spring will be dredged. Stream habitat improvement work was completed in the former Ward Mill Pond site in Lincoln County. A total of 550 boulders were placed in the stream for fish habitat

and channel shaping was done through a 1-mile stretch. Stream rehabilitation will take place this summer on the Eau Claire and Prairie rivers. We will be studying trout and other fish species in the Wolf River this summer. The entire 35 miles of trout water in Langlade County will be raft electrofished and we will implant radio transmitters in the larger trout so that we can follow their movements throughout the year. We also will be tagging trout and relying on tag returns from anglers to tell us information about how many, and when and where, fish are being caught. All of this information will help us better manage the Wolf River for trout. Last year, brook trout surveys in the Prairie River and the East Branch of the Eau Claire River showed trout numbers were down considerably from near-record high levels in 2001, a trend we’ve seen in other area streams. These dramatic fluctuations from year to year are nothing new to this part of Wisconsin, but likely reflect low water conditions and warmer water temperatures. With a return to more normal stream flow conditions and temperatures, trout numbers can rebound very quickly as they have in the past. Let’s hope it happens this summer! - *Dave Seibel, fisheries biologist, Antigo*

South Central Region

Columbia County

Park Lake - This 312-acre impoundment of the Fox River at Pardeeville has taken a turn for the worse. Its small size and large watershed have turned the lake into a nutrient trap over the years. Coupled with large carp and gizzard shad year classes in 1997, the water quality has deteriorated. Carp numbers are declining from natural mortality, but shad continue to reproduce and now dominate the fishery. An experimental effort underway now seeks to reduce shad recruitment by stocking high densities of walleye fingerlings, a predator of shad. This technique has been successful in Texas reservoirs using hybrid stripers as the predator. Fingerling walleye stocking in June 2003 was increased 10 times and the fall survey showed a nine-fold increase in survival, from the standard stocking level. The Lake District also has been planting northern pike, which are surviving. Because the shad is short-lived — three years — by reducing annual recruitment the population should noticeably decline in a few years. A higher minimum size limit for all game fish species will be proposed at the spring hearings in 2005, which if anglers approve, will take effect in 2006. **Lake Columbia** - This 500-acre cooling pond of the Columbia Generating Station near Portage allows open water fishing in the winter. The fall 2003 survey shows good numbers of 10- to 12-inch and 17- to 18-inch largemouth bass, 16- to 18-inch hybrid striped bass and presence of 20-pound flathead catfish. A few smallmouth and lots of “fiddler” channel catfish round out the sportfishery. Anglers will find bass in the 70 to 75 Fahrenheit temperature zone. An 18-inch minimum size limit on bass (one bag limit) and hybrid stripers (three bag limit) applies. Fish refuges exist on both sides of the center dike, near the plant. Public access is on the lake’s south end and is restricted to carry-in boats and motors. **Lake Wisconsin/Wisconsin River** - This water is open year-round for all species except musky and lake sturgeon. Bluegills on the lake are underfished and excellent growth provides for plentiful 8-inch fish. Smallmouth bass and flathead catfish numbers have been increasing. The 2003 year-class monitoring of walleye and sauger found average numbers. Last year, recruit-

ment was slightly above average, but the 2000 and 2001 year classes, which will be providing the 15- to 18-inch legals in 2004, were down slightly. Walleye in the no harvest 20- to 28-inch slot, fueled by high reproduction in the mid-1990s, are still being found. Sauger recruitment is typically stable, but about three times less than average walleye young-of-year numbers. Fall lake sturgeon harvest in 2003 was average on the lake – 16 fish— and on the upper river below the Dells, where 13 fish were caught. Below the Sauk Dam, a record harvest of 72 fish in fall 2003 exceeded the previous record of 52 lake sturgeon caught in fall 1991. Low flows likely played a role. Still, under the alternate year harvest regulation, the 72 lake sturgeon taken over two years is only slightly above the 10-year average throughout the 1990s, when annual harvest was allowed.

Swan Lake - Swan Lake, at 406 acres, is a natural widening of the Fox River just east of Portage. Walleye fry stocking had typically produced an outstanding fishery until three years ago. Now, overabundant gizzard shad are competing for zooplankton with the small walleye, resulting in lower walleye survival. Stocking in 2004 will be switched to larger fingerlings. The lake has become known for a decent musky fishery; a 40-inch minimum size limit applies. If you catch a tagged one, please report the number to the DNR office at Poynette. Largemouth and smallmouth bass, northern pike, catfish, crappie bluegill and yellow bass round out this fishery. Bowfin and longnose gar are also abundant predators.

Crystal Lake - Located on the border of Dane and Columbia counties, this 527-acre, shallow, eutrophic, seepage lake has become known for its quality bluegill fishery. The past few years, heavy vegetation growth in the early spring has made bluegill harvest difficult and ice fishing has also been slow. The high density of largemouth bass under the 14-inch minimum size limit help control bluegill numbers, which allows for the bluegills’ fast growth rate (8.5 inches in five years). Bass numbers have remained stable for several years and, with average growth, anglers report more legal bass being caught. Presence of yellow bass the past few years may not be a good sign because



The 500-acre cooling pond of Alliant Energy’s Columbia Generating Station near Portage allows anglers to enjoy open water fishing year-round. The fall 2003 survey showed good numbers of 10- to 12-inch and 17- to 18-inch largemouth bass, 16- to 18-inch hybrid striped bass, and 20-plus pound flathead catfish, such as this one held by Jason Himebauch, a DNR fisheries staffer.

Photo by Tim Larson

their abundance is typically correlated with a reduction in other panfish species. **Sauk County**

Devils Lake - The two-story brown trout fishery continues to grow in popularity. About 15 percent of the catch is comprised of 2-year-old trout, 14- to 17-inches long, which have survived one summer, by seeking out a 4-foot layer of oxygenated water just under the thermocline. Stocked at 9 inches in April, they grow to 12 inches the following fall. Open season is from the first Saturday in May until March 1, size limit is 9 inches, daily bag is three, and an inland trout stamp is required. Many anglers are enjoying ice fishing for the trout, using fathead minnows. The lake touts a trophy northern pike fishery with its 32-inch size limit. Largemouth, smallmouth bass and jumbo bluegills are also present. Only electric motors are allowed. DNR is now operating a 24-inch siphon to withdraw phosphorus from the hypolimnion before the lake turns over in the fall. Over 10 to 15 years, the goal is to return the lake to a more pristine state, which will be most noticeable to lake users by less filamentous algae and increased water clarity. Slower fish growth will likely be a trade-off.

Lake Redstone - This scenic, 600-acre impoundment in northwest Sauk County continues to provide excellent fishing. Crappie fishing is popular during the spawning period. Walleye stocking continues to fuel a quality fishery. Good numbers up to 20 inches are noted. Smallmouth bass stocking in 1998 and 1999 by a local club have now established a natural reproducing population. The lake has also become known for musky, with several legal fish noted (40-inch minimum size limit). Good size structure of largemouth bass, channel catfish and bluegill round out the fishery. Sauk County maintains a beach and picnic area on the south end of the lake and there are three public boat landings. **White Mound Lake** - Its 104 acres have been drawn down to 40 acres and maximum depth of 9 feet during the winter of 2003-04 to allow for sediment removal in the two bays. Until the lake refills, hopefully by the May opener, it will be closed to fishing. The fishery has declined in recent years, with fewer bass numbers and more bluegills. The drawdown will optimize bass predation and the dredging will reduce milfoil to allow for continued predator control on the bluegill. It should return to its quality bluegill status of the 1990s.

continued on page 8

South Central Region

continued rom page 7

Lake Virginia - Lake Virginia will be in a completely drained state over the winter. The outlet structure had to be replaced on this 35-acre subdivision lake east of Reedsburg. Compaction of the sediment and freezing should help reduce the dense vegetation for a while. The Lake District is also installing a new aeration system. DNR will restock with bass and bluegill during 2004.

Sauk and Columbia county trout streams and kid’s fishing ponds - The stocking of wild strain trout has shown better survival and increased numbers in most streams. About 80 percent of the streams are stocked. The better streams in Columbia County are Rowan and Lodi, while in Sauk County, try Dell and Rowley. During late May and early June, the following ponds receive a planting of panfish by local sportsmen’s clubs: Plenke Pond in Reedsburg, Deppe Pond in Baraboo, and Pauquette Pond in Portage.

Dane County

Fish Lake - The 18-inch bass size limit offers a good opportunity to catch and release fish under 18 inches. A 2003 fish survey revealed that although the number of bass over 8 inches are about half that of nearby Crystal Lake, it’s above average for area lakes. Spring fyke netting for northern pike found mostly stocked fish from the 2000 and 2002 year classes. Possibly the high water levels, which flooded out the cattails, impacted 2003 spawning. A pumping project to maintain a lower lake level is scheduled to begin in April 2004. Carp are abundant and nutrient levels from agricultural runoff over the years are high. Abundant milfoil beds reduce predation on the abundant bluegill, but a fair number over 7 inches are present. Mud Lake, connected by a road culvert, was noted to contain good populations of quality size yellow bullheads and 7- to 9-inch crappie. - *Tim Larson, fisheries biologist, Poynette*

Madison Chain of Lakes

Mendota: A great all-around water known for good walleye action and an up-and-coming smallmouth bass population. Weed edges seem consistently good areas for both species. This lake has higher-than-usual size limits on northern pike (40-inch minimum) but routinely produces fish in the 20-pound class. A popular winter tip-up and fall fishery exist. Big baits seem to go with big fish. Summer action for bluegills is strong in University Bay and along Warner Bay shorelines, and for white bass along Maple Bluff. Perch populations are variable, with the last exceptional year in 2000. Summer net catches suggest only fair perch numbers in the near future.

Monona: An outstanding largemouth bass resource graces Monona, especially

along its north shore and in and around Brittingham Bay. Monona also is a consistently quality bluegill lake, with ice action in Turville and Squaw bays, and summer “drift” fishing being productive. Musky aficionados will find about one fish per acre of their favorite quarry. 2003 surveys landed a few fish over 30 pounds with strong numbers of upper 30-inchers present. Overlooked are Monona’s smallmouth and walleye populations: both are well represented with quality fish found seasonally along rocky areas.

Waubesa and Kegonsa: While smaller, these two lakes are traditionally good fishing lakes. Spring panfish are accessible at Babcock Park and at the mouth of the Yahara near Fish Camp launch. Both lakes have healthy northern pike populations. Anglers are wise to consider the marshy areas of Upper and Lower Mud lakes where these fish aggregate and spawn. Waubesa anglers can find musky action along weed edges and around submerged bars. Kegonsa’s north shore, while “flat,” often holds walleyes in the area around the State Park and Lafallotte dams.

Wingra: At slightly under 350 acres, Wingra’s small size is made up for in BIG musky action. Known as the “action” lake, Wingra has an abundance of 37- to 39-inch fish that are willing to bite. While panfish are somewhat smaller here, their numbers and willingness to bite make Wingra a great location to take beginners and kids to wet a line. Boating restrictions limit the type and daily use of motorized craft, so anglers should check before planning to fish.

Dane County Trout Streams

Due to a convenient conspiracy between geology and glacial near-misses, virtually all of Dane County’s trout water is in its western half. Streams range in size from true brooks to the wider, grassland-type streams that attract fly fishermen. Considerable habitat restoration work and easement maintenance in 2003 ensures they can find both the fish and fishing conditions they seek.

Black Earth Creek near Cross Plains and Mount Vernon Creek south of Mount Horeb hold high trout numbers and offer true wild fish. Recent work done on the West Branch of the Sugar River and its adjacent tributary streams – Deer Creek and Fries Feeder – offer newly reclaimed water and a more open “feel” along the stream corridor. New maps showing both DNR ownership and public easement along these streams are available from the South Central Regional Office in Fitchburg. Several other creeks require landowner permission but hold some nice fish – Flynn Creek, Badger Mill Creek and the Upper Sugar River.

Other Opportunities

There are a few other notable fishing opportunities that can be fruitful as well. Catfish and bullhead fans can find some fast action early on at the mouths of the Yahara

River and Six-Mile Creek. The Yahara River harbors many different habitats and seasonal fishing opportunities along its length. A canoe trip may yield walleyes, white bass, panfish, pike, and suckers. The scenery is enjoyable and the distances between put-ins and take-outs very reasonable. – *Kurt Welke, fisheries biologist, Madison*

Dodge County

Beaver Dam Lake - Crappie fishing continues to be a highlight of fishing on Beaver Dam Lake, with the majority of fish 10 to 13 inches in length. Angler reports also indicate good bluegill fishing as well. The 18-inch minimum length limit on walleyes effective in 2002 is starting to produce legal fish.

Lake Emily - Fall 2003 electrofishing produced largemouth bass from 2.4 to 16.6 inches, with an average length of 10.8 inches. Northern pike sampled during the same survey ranged from 17.4 to 34.2 inches, with an average length of 21.8 inches. The average length of bluegill was 4.2 inches, ranging in length from 1.5 to 8.5 inches.

Fox Lake - The total number of walleye sampled during 2003 fall electrofishing was 96 fish, up from 53 fish in 2002. The number of young-of-the-year (YOY) walleye under 10 inches increased to 25 fish per hour in 2003, up from 13.8 per hour in 2002 and 0 per hour in 2001 fall electrofishing. Hopefully, this positive trend will continue into future years and help improve the adult walleye population in Fox Lake. Of the total 175 bluegill sampled, length measurements were taken on 103 fish. Of those measured, 41.4 percent were greater than 6 inches. Six-inch bluegill comprised the majority (33.3 percent) of the measured bluegill sample. Of the yellow perch sampled, 60 percent, were less than 2 inches in length. This is evidence of a successful natural hatch of yellow perch produced during spring 2003.

Jefferson County

Rock Lake - Rock Lake continues to produce decent-sized largemouth and smallmouth bass, with fall 2003 electrofishing survey results showing catch rates comparable to those in 2002. Largemouth bass ranged in length from 2.4 to 16.8 inches, and smallmouth bass ranged from 2.8 to 17.7 inches. Walleye numbers remain consistently low, with catch rates of only 5.3 per hour, and range in length from 6.7 to 18.7 inches. Bluegill catch rates were comparable to those in 2002, with fish up to 8.5 inches being sampled. Rock bass were the second-most abundant panfish species, at 66 fish per hour and up to 11 inches in length. - *Laura Stremick-Thompson, fisheries biologist, Horicon*

Lafayette County

Yellowstone Lake – This 450-acre shallow impoundment located at Yellowstone State Park in Lafayette County offers fishing for channel catfish, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, walleye, northern pike, musky, black crappie, bluegill sunfish, and black bullhead. The fishery’s the best it’s been in the past decade as the result of an intensive management plan developed in 1994 to decrease bullhead and carp populations through commercial netting and using predator fish as a biological control. From 1998 through 2000, only catch and release was allowed for predator fish on Yellowstone Lake. Bullhead and carp densities decreased while aquatic plant densities increased. In addition, a quality fishery for predators was established. In 2001, a harvest slot limit for 12- to 15-inch with an aggregate daily bag limit of two fish was established for catfish, bass and walleye. This limit will still be in effect for the 2004 fishing season.

Improvement in the lake’s overall health has led to increased reproduction of largemouth bass, channel catfish, and bluegill sunfish. The abundance of the young blue-

gill as forage has increased the growth rates of bass, walleye, and crappies, producing fish of a quality length and weight. Walleye ranging from 12 to 18 inches are abundant with 38 percent of the walleye sampled in the 15- to 25-inch range. Largemouth bass are common, with fish ranging from 12 to 22 inches. The 2001 year class of bass should produce a good to excellent fishery over the next three years. The abundance of 6- to 7-inch bluegill in 2003 should be in the 7- to 8-inch range for 2004. In 2003, crappies 10 to 11 inches were common in anglers’ creels and should be present for 2004. The large population of 6.5 to 7.5 inch crappies in 2003 will be in the 9- to 10-inch range by the end of the 2004 fishing season, with some over 10 inches. By reducing the number of black bullheads, the remaining bullheads have reached lengths ranging from 10 to 11 inches. Many anglers are now utilizing this panfishery as well. The northern pike and musky populations are low density large fish populations, and angling success for them is sporadic.

Iowa County

Twin Valley Lake – Twin Valley, a 150-acre impoundment with a maximum depth of 33 feet that is located in Governor Dodge State Park, offers fishing for muskies, largemouth bass, walleye, bluegill sunfish and black crappies. The current regulation for bass is catch and release and has produced an excellent bass fishery with bass in the 15- to 18-inch range common. Musky fishing is good to excellent depending on the time of year, with muskies 36 to 40 inches common. There is a maximum length limit of 40 inches for musky. Panfish are abundant with crappies in the 8- to 9-inch range and bluegill 6 to 6.5-inches. A stocking program for walleye has produced a good number of fish in the 15-inch range. There is a maximum length limit of 18 inches for walleye.

Cox Hollow Lake – Cox Hollow, a 96-acre impoundment with a maximum depth of 26 feet in Governor Dodge State Park, offers fishing for largemouth bass, bluegill sunfish, black crappies, and limited yellow perch. The current regulation for bass is no length limit and a daily bag of five fish. This regulation aims to reduce the number of bass and increase the growth rate of remaining bass. The bass fishery is currently fair to good with bass in limited numbers, which should improve the fishing for bass over 14 inches over the next two years. Panfish are abundant, with crappies 9 to 10 inches and bluegill 7 to 8 inches. Anglers may catch a walleye or two in 2004; a stocking program for walleye started in 2003.

Blackhawk Lake – Blackhawk Lake, a 220-acre impoundment with a maximum depth of 43 feet, offers fishing for largemouth bass, bluegill sunfish, black crappies, and limited yellow perch. The current regulation for largemouth bass is no length limit and a daily bag of five fish. This regulation aims to reduce the number of bass and increase the growth rate of the remaining bass. The bass fishery is currently good to excellent with good numbers, and many bass in the 11- to 13-inch range, with bass over 16 inches present. Anglers have done a good job of keeping the smaller stunted bass and releasing bass over 16 inches. Panfish are abundant with crappies 9 to 10 inches and bluegill 8 to 9 inches. Crappies over 10 inches are common through the ice.

Southwestern Wisconsin smallmouth bass streams

2003 was a good year for smallmouth bass reproduction in southwestern Wisconsin streams. It will take four growing seasons for these fish to reach 12 inches. Although reproduction has been down in recent history, there are still many opportunities for anglers to catch smallmouth 12 to 16 inches. Some streams that anglers may want to take a look at include the Yellowstone River, Galena River, Schullsburg Branch, Blockhouse Creek, Rattlesnake Creek, Mineral Point Branch,



Yellowstone Lake carp removal

An intensive management plan is paying off in its efforts to decrease bullhead and carp populations through commercial netting of the fish and using predator fish as a biological control. The plan has decreased bullhead and carp densities while increasing aquatic plant densities, improving the lake’s health and leading to increased reproduction of largemouth bass, channel catfish, and bluegill sunfish.

Photo by Bradd Sims



Platte River system and the Grant River system. Landowner permission is required before walking along stream banks without public fishing easements. - *Bradd Sims, fisheries biologist, Dodgeville*

Southwestern Wisconsin trout streams

Despite the drought, most streams maintained more than enough quality cold water to carry their trout through with very little appreciable damage to the fisheries. Except for the marginal streams, the trout should redistribute themselves throughout the streams by spring 2004. All of the better streams now have excellent numbers of wild trout with a very good to excellent size distribution. I would anticipate an early season that provides fishing as good as you can possibly expect to find, plus there should be no mosquitoes, no tall grass, no nettles, limited in-stream vegetation, and awesome weather and scenery. The use of a fairly significant number of specially tailored regulations allow anglers to find large numbers of fish, and, in a number of fisheries, significant numbers of large fish. One other note: early in the catch-and-release season, there is a chance of catching some brook trout in the middle and lower reaches of some larger streams with small brook trout feeder streams. During most of the fishing season, these fish are in the upper reaches of these small streams, hidden away from anglers by overhanging grasses or bush. One cautionary note is that if Wisconsin doesn't receive significant snow cover and spring rains to replenish the groundwater, things could take a dramatic turn for the worse by the mid-summer.

Lower Wisconsin River

The overall fishery is in good shape. Catfish populations, while not abundant, are in good shape with a number having a good average size. The smallmouth bass fishery continues to be good, although below what it was in the 1980s and early 1990s and far below the river's biological capacity. Still, anglers will regularly catch some moderately large fish.

Walleye numbers and average size seem to be improving, apparently thanks to the new 18-inch minimum size limit and a low 2002 harvest during the spring run. Walleye harvest is still intense and the major gains over historic populations will be in the number of fish between 15 and 18 inches. While more fish over 18 inches will be taken, the number per angler will not be as high as normal because the closure of the winter fishery below some of the dams will likely dramatically increase pressure on fishing below the Prairie du Sac dam.

The sauger population, which is and has been governed by a 15-inch size limit, is in pretty good shape. The panfish fisheries including bluegill, crappie and white bass, should be considered in good shape and stable, but the panfish fishery on the backwater could suffer winterkill problems, as has happened in the past when water levels are low. Low water levels have caused significant difficulty in boating, even for small boats and river boats. Also, recent changes in dam operation have increased the chance that a boat launched when more water is being discharged will not be able to get back to the landing when less water is being discharged.

Mississippi River

Panfishing on the Mississippi River has been dramatically improving in recent years, largely as a result of the recent increase in weed beds in the river but also likely because of the new panfish bag limits. Changes in water level management to help promote the weed growth, along with changes in closing dams and dredging, are all aimed at improving panfish populations. These actions are really paying dividends. – *Gene Van Dyck, fisheries biologist, Dodgeville*

Southeast Region

Lake Michigan

Open water fishing – Chinook fishing in recent years has been very good in open water. With more than 1.4 million chinooks stocked annually, there is no reason this trend shouldn't continue. In summer 2003, many fish in the 15- to 20-plus pound range were reported. Excellent growth indicates fish managers have achieved balance between the number of salmon stocked to available forage.

In spring 2003, coho were abundant but relatively small. They attained faster growth rates as the summer wore on, and 8- or 9-pound fish became more and more common. In 2004, coho fishing is expected to be as good as, if not better than, 2003. Spring coho fishing can be some of the fastest salmon action on Lake Michigan, with multiple strikes common. Wisconsin's Lake Michigan coho fishery begins in the south (Kenosha and Racine) in April and May. The coho fishing gradually moves north as water temperatures rise, typically reaching Milwaukee in May and Port Washington and Sheboygan by June.

The lake trout season was good in 2003 when anglers chose to target them. We believe that recent stockings of nearshore sites have contributed to the strong lake trout fishery, and this trend should continue in 2004. Steelhead catches in recent years have been average at best. Because of the excellent chinook fishing close to shore, anglers haven't been as inclined to search for steelhead out in deeper water.

Nearshore fishing - Shore anglers enjoyed some very good fishing in July and August working harbors and river mouths for Skamania steelhead. These fish are staging in anticipation of their early fall spawning run. The Chambers Creek and Ganaraska strains should also provide some action for anglers in late winter and early spring.

In recent years, two additional rainbow trout strains have been stocked on an experimental basis. The Arlee strain was stocked in 2001, 2002, and 2003, along with the Kamloops strain starting in 2003. The Arlees have quickly been reaching catchable size and have been caught in Sheboygan, Milwaukee, and Kenosha. We hope that these strains of rainbow trout will continue to augment the nearshore fishery in coming years.

Brown trout fishing was hit-or-miss in spring 2003 but improved in the fall. Browns provide a consistent nearshore fishery during the cold months, especially at warm-water discharges and near river mouths. We see dependable returns on domestic brown trout, while the fast-growing, hard-fighting Seeforellen strain continues to add excitement to the brown trout fishery. We annually stock about 190,000 Seeforellen and 400,000 domestic brown

trout in southeast Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan.

Although the yellow perch population in Lake Michigan continues to be depressed, fishing from the piers and shore was very good at times in spring and summer 2003. The 1998 year class still supports the greatest percentage of the harvest, but the 2001 year class is beginning to show up in catches as well. Perch fishing remains closed from May 1 through June 15 to protect mature females before spawning.

Many of our harbors have seen habitat improvements over the last decade, increasing naturally reproducing populations of smallmouth bass and northern pike. Fishing for these species native to Lake Michigan has increased as more anglers have learned to target them.

Walleye are stocked in the Milwaukee River as part of a walleye restoration plan. The walleye have shown good survival and high growth rates.

Tributary fishing - Extreme drought conditions throughout the summer and early fall greatly reduced fall tributary spawning runs. A record low number of chinook and coho salmon were processed at the Root River Steelhead Facility in Racine. Early November rains helped bring spawning cohos and some Skamania strain steelhead to the facility, but it was too little too late. The shortfall of coho eggs was made up with the help of other Great Lakes states, and the egg quota for chinook salmon was met at the Strawberry Creek weir in Door County.

Spring and fall steelhead runs have not been strong in recent years. Anglers can generally look for Skamania as water temperatures start to cool in mid-September. Chambers Creek usually follows in late fall and can be found through March and early April. Ganaraska enter the streams as early as late November and December and again from late March through April.

As always, the tributary fishery depends on water temperature and flow conditions, which trigger the upstream migration of salmonids. If flow conditions improve in 2004, we expect a better tributary fishery.

For up-to-date fishing information, call the Southern Lake Michigan Fishing Hotline at (414) 382-7920. To read information about DNR's Lake Michigan program, visit www.fishingwisconsin.org then look under "Fisheries Program" to find "Lake Michigan." – *Pradeep Hirethota, fisheries biologist, and Cheryl Peterson, fisheries technician, Milwaukee*

Sheboygan, Washington and eastern Fond du Lac counties

A wide variety of fishing opportunities are available. Lakes in the Kettle Moraine State Forest offer many opportunities to fish for panfish and largemouth bass.



Trout are really taking to a recently completed trout habitat improvement project on Bluff Creek in Walworth County. Randy Schumacher, DNR fisheries supervisor, displays a brown trout captured during a stream-shocking survey in spring 2003.

Photo by Rick Dauffenbach

Electrofishing surveys on Long Lake near Dundee in Fond du Lac County have found an excellent largemouth bass population. Long Lake is the top area producer of panfish. It also has a good population of northern pike and an occasional walleye. Boating use is very heavy during most day-time periods but morning and evening fishing can be excellent.

The smaller lakes in the Kettles offer many chances to fish for panfish and bass. Canoes can be used in many of these lakes to get back into less-disturbed areas to both fish and enjoy wildlife. Public access is available at most of the lakes.

Washington County

Big Cedar Lake – This lake offers everything from bluegills to walleyes to lake trout. Big Cedar is the sixth deepest lake in Wisconsin yet it has vast areas of more shallow water with habitat that is typical of the area's smaller lakes. We have observed several 12-pound-plus walleyes in surveys and have had reports from anglers of 35-inch plus lake trout. Cisco can also be caught in winter in the south basin. In summer, boating traffic is heavy on weekends and light during the week. Public access is available on Goring Drive off of State Highway 144 at the lake's north end.

Pike Lake - Good walleye fishing is available at times on Pike Lake near Hartford. Our survey a few years ago found a very healthy number of legal size walleyes in the lake. Evenings and mornings are best. Motor trolling is legal on Pike and Big Cedar.

Trout fishing will be a challenge this year in area streams. Unlike past years, most trout streams will not be stocked due to budget cuts and streams with natural production are rare. The North Branch of the Milwaukee River (Nichols Creek) above the Village of Cascade has an entirely wild population of brown trout. The stream is small and tough to fish but full of fish.

All portions of the Onion River, Mill Creek and Ben Nutt Creek upstream of County Highway E in Sheboygan County will have a new trout fishing regulation for 2004: a 15-inch minimum size limit, one daily bag limit and artificial lures only restriction. DNR and the Lakeshore Chapter of Trout Unlimited have done a number of habitat improvement projects upstream and downstream of County Highway E over the past few years to increase habitat and make angling easier. - *John E. Nelson, senior fisheries biologist*

continued on page 10



During spring population surveys, Susan Beyler, DNR fisheries biologist, places a northern pike in a holding tank until it can be measured during a fyke net survey on Moose Lake in Waukesha County in 2003.

Photo by Randy Schumacher

Southeast Region

continued from page 9

Walworth, Kenosha, and Racine counties

Inland fishing on lakes in Walworth, Racine, and Kenosha counties is expected to be similar to past years' prospects. Good panfish angling can be had on Mary, Elizabeth, Powers, Tichigan, and Beulah lakes, and on the Lauderdale chain. BIG bluegills and crappies provide good action on Delavan, and Geneva lakes. DNR regularly stocks walleyes into Wind, Eagle, Tichigan, Silver, Delavan, and Geneva lakes, and the Fox River. Go to Delavan and Geneva lakes for the larger fish. Musky are regularly stocked into Delavan, and Silver lakes. Recent fisheries surveys have turned up fish up to 48 inches in length. Most lakes in the three-county area support good populations of largemouth bass. Check special fishing regulations on Browns, Rockland, Eagle, Beulah, and Delavan lakes. Whitewater Lake traditionally produces some nice fish. Geneva Lake is well known for its excellent smallmouth bass fishery. Anglers also will have fun catching smallmouth bass on the Fox River at Rochester and Burlington. The Fox River and Tichigan Lake support healthy populations of channel catfish. Anglers should try their luck on Tichigan Lake as well as on the Fox River above Waterford and below Burlington. DNR's wild brown trout stocking and habitat improvement project on Bluff/Whitewater Creek has paid dividends. Recent fish surveys have produced trout up to 20 inches. - Doug E. Welch, senior fisheries biologist, Sturtevant

Waukesha County lakes

Muskies: Muskies are doing well in Waukesha County lakes. Muskies up to 52 inches (41 pounds) have been caught in recent surveys. Generally, two or more muskies over 50 inches long are reported from each of Pewaukee and Okauchee Lakes. Watch the annual musky run up the Oconomowoc River from Oconomowoc Lake at the Highway R bridge but be careful of traffic. The run usually starts around the beginning of April, or when water temperatures rise into the 40s. Recent DNR surveys showed Pewaukee Lake to have about 0.5 muskies per acre and Okauchee to have 0.2 per acre. A musky survey is planned for spring 2004 on Oconomowoc Lake.

Walleyes: Walleye stocking has been very successful in recent years, so stocked walleye lakes should be ready for action. Pine, Nagawicka and Oconomowoc are good choices, especially for late evening fishing. All have lots of structure to target for big walleyes.

Bass: Pine Lake has always been noted for its excellent largemouth and smallmouth fisheries, and this year should be no exception. Despite recent droughts, this deep, springfed lake did not suffer undue effects from lack of precipitation. Large bays on the east and west shoreline are good spots to try, especially where you find some lily pads or cabbage weed. Fine bass action also can be found on Oconomowoc Lake. The small channels along the south shore should hold some early bass action.

Northern Pike: A recent survey on Okauchee Lake came up with five northerns per acre, all from natural reproduction. Healthy northerns up to 37 inches were caught. Other good bets for northerns are Golden Lake, Ashippun Lake, and the Phantom lakes.

Panfish: Good early crappie action can be found right after ice-out on Lac La Belle, Okauchee, Nagawicka and Pine lakes. Fish near structure, especially sunken trees and sharp drop-offs. Bluegill action can be found on Little Muskego Lake and Big Muskego Lake. Be advised, though, that Big Muskego has an 8-inch minimum size limit on all panfish. Another good choice for bluegills is Lake Denoon. - Sue Beyler, senior fisheries biologist, Eagle

West Central Region

Mississippi River

Anglers who have lived around the river for most of their lives can't remember the fishing being any better. However, if the near-record low water levels of 2003 continue, conditions will make navigation very hazardous for boaters. Structures such as wing dams, closing dams, and sunken logs that normally would be covered by several feet of water may be exposed or submerged just below the surface. Boaters who are unfamiliar with these waters should proceed with caution when navigating side sloughs and main channel borders to avoid turning a fishing or recreational outing into a disaster.

Walleye: Walleye and sauger populations look very good throughout all the Mississippi River pools. During 2003 fall electrofishing surveys, walleyes ranged from 12 to 28 inches with large numbers in the 15- to 18-inch size range. Sauger varied from 10 to 21 inches with a good number of fish 13 to 17 inches. The larger number of 15- to 18-inch walleye and 13- to 17-inch sauger can be attributed to the strong year class produced in spring 2001; they should provide plenty of fishing opportunities and action in coming years.



Good populations of smallmouth can be found in the Mississippi River, Long Lake and flowages of the Chippewa River, casting by the lilypads.

Photo by Robert Queen

Catfish: Populations have also fared well recently, with plenty of 2- to 3-pound channel cats showing up in our fall electrofishing surveys and anglers reporting good catches throughout 2003. The majority of fish now moving through the fishery result from an exceptional year class produced in spring 2001.

Smallmouth and largemouth bass: Populations are also looking very healthy, with plenty of fish 12 to 16 inches, few reports of sick looking fish, and no fish testing positive for largemouth bass virus (LMBV) during 2003. This virus was reported in some of the lower Mississippi River pools in 2002 and is a possible threat to the fishery; we'll continue to monitor for it and encourage anglers to report sick looking fish to area biologists.

Bluegill and crappie: Populations also looked very good in summer 2003 fyke-net and fall electrofishing surveys. Angling in 2004 should bring abundant numbers of bluegill in the 6- to 8-inch range and crappies 9 to 13 inches. Ice anglers should continue to find success in the backwaters up and down the river. It is during this winter pastime when the Mississippi River brings wonderful experiences with great views, unique fishing opportunities, and fast action. However, beware of thin ice near running sloughs and areas entering backwater lakes.

For more information on fishing conditions, contact your local sport shops or your area Chamber of Commerce. - Patrick Short, fisheries biologist, Prairie du Chien

Black River Falls Area

A large part of this area's fishery resources are coldwater trout streams. Restoration projects, land acquisition efforts, and improved land-use practices have improved habitat, water quality, trout production, and public accessibility. Stockwell Creek, Buffalo River, Trempealeau River, and Tank Creek are a few of the larger state fishing areas which, combined, provide almost 3,000 acres of public fishing grounds. Since 1998, DNR fish crews have surveyed trout populations in all of the area's categorized streams. Results indicate there should be plenty of brook and brown trout waiting to test anglers' skills in 2004.

Black River - Anglers searching for walleyes, northern pike, smallmouth bass, muskellunge, or catfish will find the area's larger rivers best bets. The Black River provides more than 250 miles of angling opportunity for these species. The upper Black, above the dam in Black River Falls, is characterized by faster flowing water and numerous rock/boulder riffles. Motor boat travel is almost impossible and most anglers wade or canoe. Below the dam, the river is wider and slower moving, creating large deep pools and extensive shallow sandy runs. Motor boat travel is possible, but most anglers either bank fish or use canoes to fish the river between ports. Since 2001, fish population monitoring in the lower river has occurred annually and shows strong populations of both sport and rough fish species. Like most inland lakes, the lower river is closed to year-round fishing to protect fish during critical spawning periods.

Popple River - In summer 2003, surveys conducted on the Popple River Watershed in Clark County showed that the lower reach contained a surprisingly good population of smallmouth bass. The upper reach and its tributary streams contained spawning and nursery habitat for smallmouth bass and abundant young of the year fish. Under normal or low water conditions, extensive stretches of exposed rock and boulders create a navigation hazard. Most anglers who visit the Popple either bank fish or wade. Since it is a tributary of the Black River, anglers also will find an occasional walleye, pike or muskellunge.

Clark County

Lake Arbutus - Most area lakes are impoundments of flowing water; Lake Arbutus is the largest at 840 acres. Spring crappie and fall muskellunge fishing are popular. Walleye fishing is usually best after first ice when adult fish move out of the upper Black River and East Fork of the Black River into the impoundment. Jackson and Clark county parks, located along the lakeshore, provide camping and boat launching facilities. In July 2003, the first carp-fishing tournament was held on Lake Arbutus. It was organized and sponsored by the Hatfield Sportsman's Club and Arbutus Lake Association. Due to success and great feedback, plans are in the works to hold another tournament in 2004.

Jackson County

Lake Wazee - Located at the site of the old Jackson County Iron Mine, Lake Wazee provides a unique fishing experience. The lake is more than 350 feet deep and holds bluegills, crappies, smallmouth bass, walleyes, rainbow trout, brook trout, and brown trout. Recently, a fishing pier was installed in the lake to provide access for anglers with disabilities. Due to its depth and crystal clear water, Wazee is also enjoyed by scuba divers. Area outfitters can provide gear and instruction for those interested in enjoying fish and the underwater environment from this perspective.

Other Black River Falls area lakes

Lakes surveyed recently by DNR crews include Trow Lake, Lake Lee, Potter Flowage, Sportsman Lake, and Mead Lake. Trow Lake, also know as Lower Merrillan Pond, contains a decent bluegill, black crappie, and largemouth bass fishery. Some nice northern pike are taken through the ice each year on tip-ups. Lake Lee, located in Millston, also has a decent panfish and bass population. Trout are stocked in the lake and anglers report catching them early in the season. The fishery in Potter Flowage is comprised mostly of panfish with an occasional bass or muskellunge present. If you're after northern pike, Sportsman Lake in Clark County is a good bet. Spring netting surveys found an abundant pike population in the lake with some fish reaching 40 inches. Important to note, Sportsman Lake was drawn down in fall of 2003 for maintenance on the dike, water control structure and boat launching facilities. Due to near-drought conditions, the lake has not returned to the level before the drawdown. Anglers may encounter exposed shoreline and have difficulty accessing and navigating the lake until the water comes back up. Mead Lake also is in Clark County and contains panfish, large and smallmouth bass, and some decent sized muskellunge. - Dan Hatleli, fisheries biologist, Black River Falls

Chippewa County

Walleye: Long Lake in northwest Chippewa County and flowages of the Chippewa River offer the best walleye action in this area. A strong 2001 year class will provide plenty of action this year for fish in the 11- to 13-inch range. Fish in the 14- to 18-inch protected slot also are plentiful, and walleyes over 18 inches are becoming more abundant. Lake Wissota and Holcombe Flowage, the two largest flowages, receive most of the fishing pressure. However, anglers should not overlook flowages that receive less pressure, among them Cornell Flowage, Old Abe Lake, and Chippewa Falls Flowage. If you're looking for a float trip, try a 7-mile section of the Chippewa River downstream of the Chippewa Falls dam to Lake Hallie. There are boat landings on both ends of the trip. Sand Lake in Chippewa/Rusk counties has a cisco forage base and offers a trophy walleye fishing opportunity, however larger walleye have a fish consumption advisory. Anglers should be prepared to spend time finding fish in the deep, clear water. Lake Eau Claire in Eau Claire County also offers good walleye action. During evening hours, look for larger walleyes in areas of vegetation in most of these lakes.

Bass: Good smallmouth bass populations can be found in Long Lake and flowages of the Chippewa River. The flowages that contain more riverine habitat, such as Old Abe Lake and Chippewa Falls Flowage, provide some of the best action. A float trip below the Chippewa Falls dam also is a good bet for smallmouth. Largemouth bass populations are best in some of the area's shallow, more fertile lakes. Some of the better lakes to try include Marshmiller, Hallie and Otter in Chippewa County and Half Moon Lake in Eau Claire County. Smaller lakes in Chippewa County can offer a lot of action, but bass size structure is more on the small side. Several lakes to try include Popple, Horseshoe, Axehandle and Two Island Lakes.

Panfish: Angling for the bread-and-butter of most anglers is excellent in area lakes. Marshmiller and Otter lakes provide some of the best panfish action, but smaller lakes such as Lake Hallie, Popple, Cornell, Half Moon and Henneman Lakes also offer good panfish action. Try Long and Sand Lakes for slab crappies, and don't forget

Holcombe Flowage and Lake Wissota. Fishing for crappies and bluegills on the latter two lakes is improving. Look for fish around cover in deeper water, especially the numerous fish cribs placed in these lakes. Altoona Lake and Lake Eau Claire, flowages of the Eau Claire River in Eau Claire County, offer quality-size perch. Finding them is not always easy because of the relatively flat bottom of these flowages.

Muskellunge: Holcombe Flowage and Lake Wissota continue as premier waters for musky fishing. Several 50-plus inch fish were reported caught in 2003. Long and Sand Lakes have good numbers of 40-plus inch muskies. Portions of the Chippewa River, including other flowages, receive less fishing pressure but offer good musky action if you know where to look for them. Try fishing in the flowing water portions below the dams. Muskies generally can be found lying in ambush downstream of structure that offers a current break.

Trout: Habitat improvements in several area streams have done a great deal to bolster trout populations. Duncan and McCann creeks in Chippewa County are our best brook trout waters. Habitat improvements have been conducted below State Highway 64 in Duncan Creek and on DNR land adjacent to State Highway 40 in McCann Creek. New parking areas were constructed for anglers fishing these stream sites. Hay Creek, another Chippewa County stream, has a burgeoning brook trout population after the stocking of brown trout was curtailed in 1998. Elk Creek, west of Chippewa Falls, offers your best opportunity for brown trout. Habitat improvements were conducted upstream and downstream of County Highway M, upstream of County Highway N, and downstream of State Highway 29. Lowes Creek on the south side of Eau Claire has been stocked with wild brown trout for the past five years. A survey conducted in fall 2003 showed good size structure of wild trout, however numbers found were somewhat low due to habitat limitations.

Catfish: More and more anglers are targeting the abundant catfish populations found in the Chippewa River. Channel and flathead catfish can be found in both the flowages and the free-flowing portions of the river. Anglers use live bait for flatheads and stink or cut baits for channel cats. – *Joe Kurz, fisheries biologist, Chippewa Falls*

Trout fishing in La Crosse, Vernon, Crawford and Monroe counties

Land use changes in recent years have made significant improvements in the quality and quantity of trout resource in the La Crosse Area. Surveys conducted in the four-county La Crosse Area (La Crosse, Crawford, Monroe and Vernon) in recent years have added almost 300 miles of either new or upgraded waters to the trout “Blue Book.” These improvements, coupled with an aggressive habitat restoration program and the switch from domestic strains of trout to “wild” trout, means greater opportunities for those who like to fish stream trout.

This is especially true for brook trout. A restoration effort for these colorful fish appears to be successful. A good number of waters formerly empty of trout now have self-sustaining populations of wild brookies. To prevent overharvest, some of these water are catch-and-release, artificial lures only. In 2003, several brookies in the 15- to 18-inch size range were caught in local streams.

Brown trout are very common in local waters, with some in excess of 20 inches in length. A change in some streams’ regulation to a five-bag limit, but a **maximum** size limit of 12 inches, was designed to encourage harvest on waters with abundant populations. Be sure to check the trout fishing regulation booklet for a listing of these special waters.

Continued drought conditions could result in lower trout numbers, however. In 2003, flows in many streams were 50 per-

cent of what they were in 2002. Lower flows means fewer places for trout to hide. It is critical that we get some winter precipitation to bring water levels back up to normal. – *Dave Vetrano, fisheries supervisor, La Crosse*

Wisconsin River (Wood, Juneau, and Adams counties)

Musky anglers in the central regions of the Wisconsin River can expect good action this coming season. This stretch of water contains Wisconsin’s “inland seas,” the Petenwell and Castle Rock flowages, which are the state’s second and fifth largest inland waterbodies and cover nearly 40,000 acres! There is a lot of elbow room to flail away with bucktails and jerk baits.

Musky: The Wisconsin River continues to demonstrate its ability to produce exceptionally large muskies. Many anglers are amazed to see the tremendous girth and condition these fish typically exhibit. The large rough fish population provides an excellent forage base for the muskies and is responsible for the excellent growth rates. A University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point research project confirmed that suckers were a highly preferred food item in the diet of muskies. Interestingly, the same study found that muskies typically did not eat walleye.

The musky populations in the Petenwell and Castle Rock flowages are completely dependent upon stocking. Musky numbers are increasing as a result of a large number of hybrids, commonly referred to as tiger musky, which have been stocked in each of the flowages in the past couple of years. Recent surveys have documented that the hybrids are surviving and are now 12- to 20-inches, the size where anglers can expect to start catching them.

Tiger muskies are known to be very aggressive and are caught more easily than the true musky, commonly on tip-ups in the winter. Anglers need to be able to differentiate between the hybrids and northern pike; northern pike have a minimum size limit of 32 inches while muskies’ minimum size limit is 34 inches.

A proposal to change the existing musky size limit to 45 inches in this stretch of the Wisconsin River received the support of the surrounding four counties during the 2002 Spring Fish & Wildlife Rule Hearings. Musky anglers wanted to give more protection to these fish, considering the especially vulnerable state of the hybrids just entering the fishery. Another vote will be taken at 2004 Spring Hearings, and if approved, the new rule will go into effect in 2005.

Walleye: Anglers should find it relatively easy to catch “numbers,” but the larger fish over 20 inches are not as abundant as is ideal. Surveys have shown an abundance of small walleyes, which indicates we have had excellent reproduction the past two springs. We are entering the third year of the new slot size limit rule designed to offer additional protection to larger fish, those between 20 and 28 inches. The jury is still out on the new rule’s effectiveness.

The Wisconsin River is open year around and receives very heavy pressure in March and April, when most state waters are closed. The success of spring fishing is very dependent upon timing because water levels and temperature determine where and when the fish will be concentrated and whether they will be active. If current flows become too strong, it’s difficult for many anglers to effectively fish. If flows are extremely low, there does not seem to be as much upstream movement in the spring. Anglers traveling to the Wisconsin River would be wise to check with local sport shops about conditions before making the trip. High water and strong currents can make fishing difficult but do produce strong hatches of walleyes, if water temperatures cooperate.

Techniques for spring walleye anglers usually include lead head jigs tipped with a minnow. Orange and chartreuse are good color choices. It is important to use thin di-

ameter line especially if the current is strong. This reduces the line drag and makes it much easier to maintain contact with the bottom. Be sure to fish slowly when the water is cold. A simple bare hook with a minnow hooked through the lips and fished slowly along the bottom often works equally well.

Trout streams: Trout anglers will find the following streams good choices for trout fishing. There is public land on each stream that is marked with boundary signs. Generally speaking, these stretches are often the best areas to fish because of the habitat improvement projects that have occurred over the years. It is not certain if the drought has harmed trout populations.

Adams County

Big Roche-a-Cri Creek - The best stretches are the upper areas of the stream within two miles of either side of County Highway G. Large numbers of brook trout with a few up to 12 inches are present. Occasionally a larger brown trout can be caught as well.

Fordham Creek and the Little Roche a Cri creeks - An excellent area to fish includes the stretch of stream above 10th Avenue, where these two streams meet.



Anglers who have lived near the Mississippi River for most of their lives say they can’t remember the fishing being any better on the main channels and backwater sloughs.

Photo by Robert Queen

Record fish reeled in at record rate

Anglers caught five state record fish in 2003:

- On May 4, Shane Cassel of Tomah caught a state record white crappie in the Cranberry Marsh in Monroe County. His catch weighed in at 3 pounds 13.1 ounces and was 16.5 inches long, besting the previous record, a 3-pound, 2-ounce white crappie. It was the tenth time this record changed hands in less than a decade.
- On May 27, Frank Brown of Chippewa Falls caught a 1 pound, 2 ounce, 9.6 inch long pumpkinseed from Big Round Lake in Polk County, edging out the previous record fish by 1 ounce.
- On June 12, Andrew Mommsen of Rice Lake used a bow and arrow to capture a 6 pound, 5.9 ounce bowfin from the Red Cedar River in Barron County. This represents the first state record for a bowfin caught with a bow and arrow.
- On July 2, David Colt of Portage pulled in a 4-pound, 4-ounce rainbow trout that was the first such fish caught in an inland water to be submitted for a state record. The fish, caught on the West Fork of the Kickapoo River, was 24.13 inches long.
- On July 12, Robert Roe of Two Rivers pulled in a 2 pound, 8.5 ounce shortnose gar from the Mississippi River in Grant County. The previous record was 2 pounds, 2 ounces.

Twenty records have fallen since 1999 in a trend that may partly reflect the public’s increased awareness of available

Brookies, browns and rainbows all naturally reproduce in this stream. Brown trout up to 20 inches were captured during 2003 stream surveys.

Neenah Creek - An excellent area to fish includes the stretch of stream that parallels County Highway E in section 12 of Jackson Township and contains excellent populations of brown trout.

Juneau County

Little Lemonweir River - This stream contains an excellent population of brown and brook trout, with some browns over 20 inches. There are literally miles of stream bank easements that have been purchased by DNR and are all posted and open to the public for fishing. A good area to fish includes any stretch of the stream within a mile of the Monroe/Juneau County line.

Wood County

The Ten Mile Creek south of Wisconsin Rapids is a good choice for catching a trout this spring. A good stretch to fish would include any of the stream between State Highway 13 and County Trunk Highway Z. – *Scott Ironside, fisheries biologist, Friendship*

state records beyond the coveted big game fish records.

Wisconsin boasts 159 fish species in 27 families, with 145 of those species native to the state. Fourteen are introduced non-native species. State records have been established in recent years for the quillback carpsucker, the mooneye, the American eel and the burbot, among others.

To read about these and other state record fish, go online to www.fishingwisconsin.org, then look under “Wisconsin fish” for “record fish.”

If you think you or someone else has caught a fish that may be a state record, here’s what you need to do:

- Don’t clean or, if at all possible, freeze the fish
- Keep the fish cool, preferably on ice
- Get the fish weighed as soon as possible on a certified scale (usually found in grocery, hardware stores, etc.) and witnessed by an observer
- Contact the nearest DNR Service Center to get the fish species positively identified and to find out whether the fish is actually a state record.
- Obtain and complete a record fish application, available at DNR Service Centers or downloadable from www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/fhp/fish/record/3brecord.htm

If possible, take a photo of you holding your prize catch and send it in to the DNR Bureau of Fisheries Management & Habitat Protection, Box 7921, Madison, Wis., 53707, in care of Karl Scheidegger.

Keep invasive plants and animals out of Wisconsin waters!

Several unwanted, exotic guests turned up in Wisconsin waters in 2003: a snakehead was discovered in the Rock River and a bighead carp made its way into Wisconsin waters of the Mississippi River.

Snakeheads, a family of fish from Asia and Africa, are voracious predators, able to eat other fish, frogs, aquatic birds and small animals. They can move over land and survive out of water for up to four days. Snakeheads are widely available, common in the pet-trade industry and sold in live food fish markets. The federal government has banned their importation and interstate transportation over concerns the exotic could potentially harm native fish, mussels and other aquatic life. Wisconsin fisheries officials believe the snakehead in the Rock River was likely released from an aquarium.

Bighead carp, imported to control plants and algae in southern U.S. fish farm ponds, escaped the ponds, and have invaded Midwestern rivers. The fish has earned headlines for injuring people when it leaps out of the water and strikes them, breaking noses and knocking people unconscious. Aside from the threat to human health, Wisconsin fisheries biologists worry that the Asian carp could inflict the same damage the common carp does: they uproot the

aquatic plants fish need for habitat, stir up sediments and harm water quality.

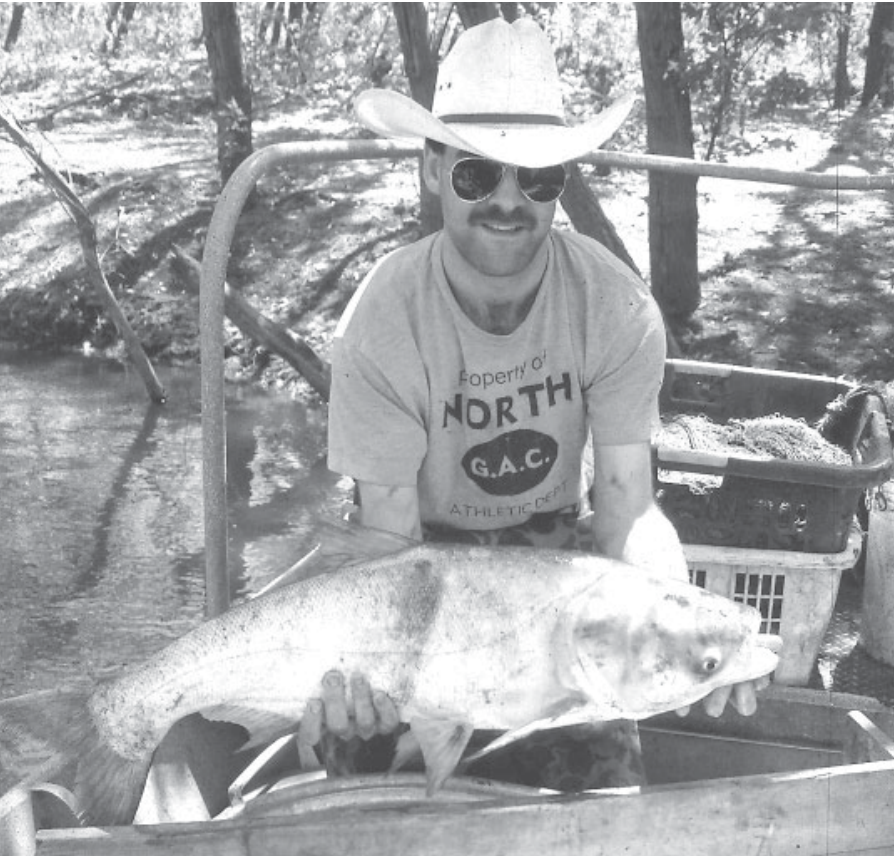
While these two exotic, invasive species grabbed the most headlines, other exotic aquatic plants, animals and diseases continued to spread in Wisconsin, among them zebra mussels, Eurasian watermilfoil, spiny water flea, and Heterosporis, an exotic fish disease that leaves fish filets looking as if they've suffered freezer burn.

To help stop their spread, please take the following simple steps every time you go fishing.

- **Never transport and release** a fish from one waterbody to another, or from an aquarium.

Before leaving a boat launch, please:

- **Inspect** your boat, trailer, and boating equipment and remove any visible plants and animals.
- **Drain** water from the motor, livewell, bilge, and transom wells while on shore and before leaving any waterbody.
- **Dump** unused bait in the garbage. Never release live bait into a waterbody, or release aquatic animals from one waterbody into another.
- **Spray** your boat and boating equipment with high-pressure water or leave it in the sun to dry for 5 days.



Bighead carp, like this one pictured here, was one of several unwanted, exotic guests to enter Wisconsin waters in 2003.

Hooked on civics

Angler education helps build kids' fishing skills, environmental literacy

By Theresa Stabo, aquatic resources educator

Wisconsin's Angler Education program is increasingly important to the future of fishing as schools drop environmental education to meet federal policies focused more on testing and less on students learning about the world in which they live.

The Department of Natural Resources program helps adult volunteers introduce children to basic fishing skills, connect them to Wisconsin's lakes and streams, and encourage them to get involved in projects to help protect fish habitat and fishing opportunities.

In 1935, lawmakers passed the Wisconsin Conservation Education Statute, making Wisconsin the first state to require that teachers receive "adequate instruction in the conservation of natural resources" and that the same be taught in public elementary and high schools.

Angler Education helps continue that conservation education tradition by cultivating the next generation of anglers, stewards, and voting citizens. Students learn about Wisconsin's aquatic resources and how fishing has been important to the Wisconsin lifestyle through the ages as well as the state's tourism industry. Students also learn about regulations and management activities that contribute to healthy fisheries, and actions they can take in their own lives to help assure good fishing.

Angler Education workshops are available year-round to help volunteers gain the skills and materials they need to offer fishing programs in their schools and communities. Adults who attend the workshops receive free materials that they can use to teach their own angler education courses and help guide adventures in local water resources investiga-

Get Hooked! Learn more about fishing and the management activities that keep fishing strong in Wisconsin on *Into the Outdoors*, the Emmy-award winning outdoors show for kids from Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Discover Wisconsin.

Catch *Into the Outdoors* on the following TV stations at these times:

Milwaukee	WITI-6	Saturdays	7:30 a.m.
Madison	WKOW-27	Saturdays	6:30 a.m.
		Sundays	7:00 a.m.
Eau Claire	WQOW-18	Sundays	7:00 a.m.
La Crosse	WXOW	Sundays	7:00 a.m.
Green Bay	WGBA-26	Sundays	7:30 a.m.
Green Bay	WACY UPN-32	Saturdays	11:00 a.m.
Wausau	WAOW-9	Sundays	9:00 a.m.
Eagle River	WAOW-34	Sundays	9:00 a.m.
Baraboo	W43BR-PAX	Sundays	4:30 p.m.
Duluth/Superior	WDIO-10	Sundays	7:00 a.m.
Hibbing MN	WIRT-13	Sundays	7:00 a.m.
Dubuque IA	KFXB-40	Sundays	8:00 a.m.
Cedar Rapids IA	KFXA-28	Sundays	8:00 a.m.

Fisheries research highlights for 2004

By Ed Emmons, chief of DNR's Fisheries and Habitat Research Program

How fish respond to dam removals and the effectiveness of walleye regulations and stocking strategies in northern Wisconsin are among studies underway by a team of scientists who provide original research and scientific information to help support fish management activities in Wisconsin waters. 2004 promises to be another productive year for the 11 research scientists and seven research technicians in DNR's Fisheries and Habitat Research Program.

Program researchers are in the final phase of evaluating multiple dam removals on the Baraboo River and how fish species respond to a free flowing river. The removal in October 2001 of the fourth dam allowed a 120-mile stretch of river to flow freely for the first time in more than 150 years. Results to date have been quite dramatic, revealing rapid re-colonization of a number of gamefish species upstream of the four former dam sites, including walleye, flathead catfish and lake sturgeon.

Program researchers also are conducting species-specific studies of walleye, muskellunge, brook and brown trout, flathead catfish, and smallmouth bass. Specific walleye research looks at how varying levels of harvest affects walleye populations in northern Wisconsin lakes, and different stocking strategies to improve survival of stocked walleye. Results will help fish managers set size and bag regulations for northern lakes, help manage the shared angler/tribal fishery in northern Wisconsin, and improve the state's return on its investment in fish propagation and stocking.

Inland trout researchers are investigating how ever-changing land use impacts coldwater trout stream habitat and water temperatures. Other trout studies will ex-

Check "yes" to lake research

When you buy a Wisconsin fishing license, consider adding \$1 to help pay for lake research. The money goes into the Lakes Research Voluntary Contribution Fund, which helps pay for research to better understand what's happening to Wisconsin fisheries and lake water quality.

amine the long-term effects of using the same rivers to supply wild parents for propagation and stocking of brown and brook trout. This research will look at impacts on local trout populations as well as the genetic consequences of continued use of these rivers.

Researchers are beginning a new study to look at age and growth of musky in some of Wisconsin's premier northern musky waters. Studies on smallmouth bass population density and habitat requirements are ongoing in both southwest Wisconsin streams as well as northern Wisconsin lakes. Flathead catfish radio tracking in the Fox River is continuing with the purpose to examine movement and to identify important flathead nursery sites on the river. Fish Research will also continue surveillance monitoring of Mississippi River pools to detect the potential invasion of exotic bighead and silver carp into Wisconsin waters.

The Fish and Habitat Research Program is funded primarily with federal Sport Fish Restoration dollars and with some revenues from the sale of fishing licenses. For more information about the program, please contact Ed Emmons, chief of Fisheries Research at (608) 221-6334.

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